

CONVERSION OF THE WEST

THE
ENGLISH

*REV. G. F.
MACLEAR
D. D.*



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A DIOCESAN MAP
OF
ENGLAND
IN THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES

Scale of Miles
20 40 60 80
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Stanford's Geog. Estab.

LECTURE
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CONVERSION OF THE WEST.

THE ENGLISH.

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CONVERSION OF THE WEST



CHAPTER I.

THE TEUTONS IN ENGLAND.

THE wave of migration which flung the Celt upon the European Continent, was succeeded by a second wave, which bore other tribes from the same Aryan homes to the frontiers of the Roman Empire. The masters of the world chose to call these new comers, as they called the Greeks, by a name which was not their own. This name for them was *Germans*. Amongst themselves, on the other hand, they were Diutisc, Thiudisco, Deutscher, or, in its Latin form, *Teutons*.

Into the greater part of their country the Romans never penetrated after the times of Drusus and Germanicus. They regarded them as barbarians, but admired the austerity and purity of their manners, the honour they paid their women, their spirit of independence, and warlike energy. They never dreamt

of the future that lay in store for these "interesting examples of fresh and vigorous nature."¹ No seer or prophet whispered that they were "the fathers of a nobler and a grander world than any that history had yet known; that here was the race, which under many names, Franks, Allemanns, Angles and Saxons and Jutes, Burgundians, Goths, Lombards, were first to overrun and then revivify exhausted nations; that it was a race which was to assert its chief and lordly place in Europe, to occupy half of a new-found world, to inherit India, to fill the islands of unknown seas; to be the craftsmen, the traders, the colonists, the explorers of the world."²

But what then lay hidden in the dark, uncertain future, has been realized, and has become a matter of history.

Many, doubtless, of different Low Dutch tribes joined, during the fifth century, in expeditions to our island, but, as is known to all, three tribes stood out above the others. From northern Denmark and southern Sweden had come the Jutes; from the south of Denmark and what is now called Schleswig-Holstein, the Angles; from Hanover and Friesland

¹ "Tacitus," remarks Guizot, "has painted the Germans, as Montaigne and Rousseau the savages, in a fit of ill-humour against his country."

² Dean Church's 'Influences of Christianity,' p. 99.

the Saxons. Though the Romans, who touched them only on their southern border, called them Saxons, the three tribes bore among themselves the name of the central tribe of their league, Angles or Englishmen.

The Teutonic settlement in England was utterly unlike those in Italy, Spain, or southern France. The Goths who founded kingdoms there, were already Christians. The Lombards had been partially Christianized. Even the Frank, if he had not been Christianized, had been in some degree familiar with Roman civilization. But our forefathers came from lands where the Roman eagle had never been seen, or had been seen only during the momentary incursions of Drusus and Germanicus. They had never felt the charm which led Gothic kings to glory in the title of Roman generals, and which led them to respect and preserve the forms of Roman civilization and the monuments of Roman art. Our forefathers appeared in the Isle of Britain purely as destroyers. Nowhere else in western Europe were the existing men and the existing institutions so utterly swept away. "The English wiped out everything Celtic and everything Roman as thoroughly as everything Roman was wiped out of Africa by the Saracen conquerors of Carthage."¹ In other lands, law, reli-

¹ Freeman's 'Norman Conquest,' i. 20.

gion, literature, manners, still remained Roman. In Britain alone, after a struggle, nowhere else so stubbornly resisted and so hardly won, they retired into a vague tradition of the past. Jute, Angle, and Saxon alike were utterly ignorant of Christianity, save as the faith of those whom they were slowly driving before them into the fastnesses of the west. Thus between the Ireland which St. Patrick had converted, the Iona which St. Columba had colonized, and the Christian continent of western Europe, has been thrust a wedge of heathenism, which formed an impassable barrier and shut off our island from all share in a higher civilization.

And yet we mistake if we imagine that our forefathers, who gave to our country its present name, were a savage people, as we understand the term. In their home by the Northern Sea they had been a nation of yeomen. There they did not dwell in towns, but men of the same kin dwelt together in villages, each having his own homestead, his house, court-yard, and farm-buildings, on the border of some wood or waste. Each village managed its own affairs. The hundred-moot settled matters which concerned those within the hundred ; in the folk-moot the affairs of the tribe were discussed and settled. The men of these farmer-commonwealths were either *corls* or *ceorls*, men of noble birth or simply free men.

The former were looked up to and held in hereditary reverence by their fellows, and from them the "ealdormen" were chosen, to lead in war and act as magistrates. But the choice was purely voluntary, and the men of noble birth did not exercise any privileged power over other free men.

In the main our forefathers were what they had been in the old country. The freeman constituted the basis of the new society. War had made him a destroyer, and created the "king," the "thegns" or military nobles, and the "serf." But war was no sooner over, than the warrior settled down into the farmer, and the home of the peasant-churl rose beside the heap of goblin-haunted stones that marked the site of the villa he had burnt. The English kinsfolk settled in groups over the conquered country, as the lot fell to each, no longer kinsfolk only, but dwellers in the same plot, knit together by their common holding within the same bounds. Each little village commonwealth lived the same life in Britain as its fathers had lived at home. Each had its moot-hill or sacred tree as a centre, its "mark" as a border; each judged by witness of the kinsfolk, and made laws in the assembly of its wise men, and chose its own leaders among the "eorls" for peace or war.¹

¹ Green's 'History of the English People,' p. 12.

Thus, if Britain seemed to be a waste from which Roman civilization had fled, it contained within the new English society, which had been transferred to its soil, the germ of a higher and nobler life than that which had passed away.

CHAPTER II.

TEUTONIC HEATHENDOM.

FROM these observations on the social characteristics of the Teutons, we pass to their religion and mode of worship.

In the patriarchal period of their history, as every father of a family was a king, so also he was a priest in his own house, and the chief was priest for the tribe.

The patriarchal state was reflected in the primitive faith. "Who is first and eldest of the gods?" it is asked in the *Edda*, and the answer is, "He is called *Allfadir* in our tongue." He is "the living and awful Being," the "Author of everything that exists." He lives from all ages, and rules and directs all things great and small. He made heaven and earth, and *the lift*, that is, the sky, and all belongs to him, and what is most, he made man, and gave him a soul that shall live and never perish, though the body rot to mould or burn to ashes.¹ He, "the Ancient," "the

¹ Comp. Thorpe's 'Northern Mythology,' i. 229; Dasent's 'Norsemen in Iceland,' p. 187.

Eternal," possesses an infinite power and a boundless knowledge. He cannot be confined within the enclosure of walls or represented by any likeness to the human figure¹, and can only be worshipped in the awful silence of the boundless forest and the consecrated grove.

But though such seems to have been the elevated idea of the Deity common to all the Teutonic tribes, it was too refined to retain a lasting hold on the mind and conscience. It lost more and more its original distinctness, and retiring into the background, survived only as the feeble echo of an older and purer creed. Just as the Aryan of the East on crossing the Hindû Alps was spellbound by the new and beauteous world into which he was transplanted,² so his Aryan brother of the West in the course of his migrations towards colder climes, bowed down before "the wild and overbearing powers" around him, and nature in all her forms and manifestations claimed his adoration.

Not merely the heavenly bodies, the sun, moon, and stars, or the earth with its trees and springs, its fountains and hills, or the sea with its storms and calms, but all things visible, as organs and instru-

¹ Tacitus, 'Germania,' ch. ix. ; Grimm's 'Deutsche Mythologie,' Einleitung, pp. 9-11.

² Hardwick's 'Christ and other Masters,' p. 125.

ments of Deity, were deserving of reverent adoration. Nothing was too trifling. The quivering leaf, the crackling flame, the falling thunderbolt, the flight or song of birds, the neighing of horses, man's dreams and visions, even the movements of his pulse, all claimed attention, all might give some sign from the other world. Hence, among all the Teutonic nations, the peculiar regard that was paid to oracles and divination, to enchanters, interpreters of dreams, diviners by the offering cup, raisers of storms, consultants of the entrails of victims.¹ All nature had a voice for the imaginative Teuton. The skies, the woods, the spring, the well, the lake, the hill, were his books, his oracles, his divinities.

But as man grows strong, nature grows weak. He ceases to quail before her mighty powers. He learns to defy the wind and storm, the frost and cold. The reign of powers malevolent to man is over. But now that he has put nature under his feet, "a new race of divinities arises, the disposers and avengers and subduers of nature." Nature-worship is blended with a complicated system of human gods.

The first and eldest of the gods, we know, was Odin, Wuotan or Woden. To him the royal

¹ See the 'Indiculus Superstitionum Bonifacii Opp.,' his letter to Cuthbert, ep. lxiii., ed. Migne; and the Appendix to Kemble's 'Saxons in England,' i. 523-532.

families of all the Teutonic races traced their lineage; from him one of the days of the week derives its name;¹ and with his name so many places in England are compounded, that it is clear his worship must have been current throughout the island.² But in the course of time he becomes the father of a family, and his power is divided amongst a number of inferior divinities, sprung from himself, to whom he imparts a portion of his greatness. He shares the worship of his votaries with Thor³ or Thunor, the Thunderer, "the chief of the gods in strength and

¹ Wodnes-dæg = Wednesday.

² Kemble's 'Saxons in England,' i. 343. *Wanborough*, formerly *Wodnesbrorh*, in Surrey; *Wanborough*, in Wiltshire; *Wednesbury*, in Staffordshire; *Wisborow Hill*, in Essex; *Woodnesborough*, in Kent and Wilts; *Wembury*, in Devon; *Wanstrow* (= *Wodnestreow*), in Somerset; *Wansdike*, in Wiltshire; *Woden Hill*, on Bagshot Heath; *Wonston*, in Hampshire; *Wedneshough*, in Lancashire; *Wansford*, in Northamptonshire; *Wanstead*, in Essex, are some of the many places in which his name occurs. See Isaac Taylor's 'Words and Places,' p. 218, 2nd ed.

³ "We find traces of the worship of this deity in the names of *Thundersfield*, in Surrey; two places called *Thundersleigh*, in Essex, and one in Hants, as well as *Thundridge*, in Herts, and *Thunderhill*, in Surrey. In some cases it is probable that the name may have been derived from some Viking who bore the name of Thor. The Anglo-Saxon names, however, are not liable to this ambiguity, since it does not appear that any Anglo-Saxon—more timid or more reverent than the Northman—ever dared to assume the name of the dreaded Thunor."—'Words and Places,' p. 219.

might" ; with Tíw,¹ the Teutonic Mars, "the giver of victory," "the god of battle" ; with Freyr,² the god of fertility, of seed-time, and harvest, of marriage and fruitfulness ; with Baldr,³ fairest of all his sons, "the god of light and grace, of splendour, manly excellence and manly beauty," worshipped in England under the name of Pol or Pal⁴ ; with Sætere,⁵ the "Placer or Disposer," whence comes the name of the seventh week-day.

The venerable goddess Frigge, the wife of Wotan, gave her name to the sixth day of the week. She presided over the sweet springtime and the rising

¹ Tíw, the Old-Norse Tyr, gives us *Tiwesdæg*=Tuesday, and *Tew* in Oxfordshire, and *Tewin* in Hertfordshire.

² Freyr = old German *Fro*. The seat of his worship was at Upsala, but he enjoyed an extensive worship in all parts of Europe. His sacred animal was the boar.

³ Baldr = Bældäg, in Old German Sultack, was the Phœbus Apollo of Teutonic mythology. There are a few places in which the name of this deity can yet be traced :—Baldock (Herts) = "Baldr's Oak ;" Balderton (Notts) = "Baldr's town ;" Baldon-toot (Oxford)=the teotha or tything of Baldr. —See Edmunds' 'Traces of History in Names of Places,' p. 170, and comp. Kemble, i. 363.

⁴ Whose name Kemble traces in *Polebrooke*, in Northamptonshire ; *Polesworth*, in Warwickshire ; *Polstead*, in Surrey ; *Polsden*, in Hampshire ; *Polsdon*, in Surrey. — 'Saxons in England,' i. 367.

⁵ Hence some would derive *Satterthwaite* (Cumb.) = "Sætere's clearing," and *Satterleigh*, in Devonshire.—Edmunds, p. 278 ; Kemble, i. 372.

seed, with her attendants Fulla, "plenty," Hlin, "warmth," and Gna, "the sweet and gentle breeze." Other goddesses mentioned by Bede were Hreda, to whom March was dedicated, and Eostre or Ostara,¹ a goddess of brightness and splendour, of the morning beams, of the newly-awakening year, when the sun first begins to recover power after the gloom and darkness of winter. She has given us the name of the great festival of the Church, which commemorates the resurrection of our Lord, the true "Light of the world."²

But the Teuton could not look out upon the natural world without tracing in its contradictory phenomena the operation of dark and sinister as well as blythe and beneficent powers, who had brought about disquiet and strife in high places, and with whose machinations the human race has become entangled. Hence the belief in fiends and monsters. Chief of all these was Loki, the "calumniator and

¹ Compare the Sanskrit *ushas* = Aurora, the Latin *auster* = the south, and the English *east*. Two parishes in Essex go by the name of *Good Easter* and *High Easter*.

² "Nearer to the popular fancy lay deities of wood and fell, or hero-gods of legend and song; Nicor, the water-sprite who survives in our nixies, and 'Old Nick;' Weland, the forger of weighty shields and sharp-biting swords, who found a later home in the 'Weyland's smithy' of Berkshire; Ejil, the hero-archer, whose legend is one with that of Cloudesley or Tell."—Green's 'English People,' i. 17.

backbiter of the gods," the "grand contriver of deceit and fraud." Once he had been the friend and associate of the gods, united with them by the most sacred bonds of brotherhood. But he fell like Lucifer, and though fairer than any of human mould, his "mind is evil," "he cheateth in all things," and in the acts of perfidy and craft he hath no equal. Terrible in his threefold offspring, the first Fenris-wolf, the second Midgard's-worm, the third Hel,¹ the mistress of the cold and joyless underworld without song or wine or feast, far removed from the soul-inspiring company of heroes in Valhalla, glorying in the great deeds of their worldly life. The realm of *Hel* was Hades, "the invisible under-world." *Nástrand* was the place of torment, filled with foulness, peopled with poisonous serpents, dark, cold, and gloomy, the abode of the perjurer and the secret murderer.

"With the entrance of Loki into their mythology,"² it has been observed that "the milder natural religion" of the Teutons took a more warlike and savage character, and instead of ruling the world in peace,

¹ "The name," remarks Isaac Taylor, "seems to be confined to Yorkshire. It may possibly be present in the names of *Helli-field*, *Hellathyne*, *Helwith*, two *Henleys*, *Healigh*, and *Helagh*, all in Yorkshire."—'Words and Places,' p. 221, 2nd ed.

² Dasent's 'Norsemen in Iceland,' p. 191; 'Burnt Njal,' i. xiii.

"the father of gods and men" becomes the "god of battles," "the terrible" and "severe god," the "father of slaughter." Their creed was but the transfiguration of the natural man, with all his virtues and vices, all his feelings, and passions, and natural affections. It was no cringing belief in superior powers. If the Teuton did his duty, Valhalla was his rightful meed. He looked upon the lesser gods, even in the height of his belief, as above him indeed in power, but as only his equals in right. They were bound to protect him if he sacrificed to them and honoured them, but if he thought himself unfairly treated, even by his gods, he openly took them to task, forsook their worship, and destroyed¹ their temples.

For though it may be true that in the earliest times the sacred grove and the obscurity of the impenetrable forest may have been regarded as the fittest temple of the deity whom no enclosure could contain, or mortal form represent, yet with the introduction of an elaborate form of polytheism there gradually grew up a more elaborate form of worship and ritual. In every settlement he formed, the Teuton chief erected, besides the home and farm buildings, "the Hof," or temple of the gods. The fact that these temples were made of wood, and

¹ For illustrations of this compare the speech of Coifi at Godmundingham. See below, p. 50.

probably, at least in great part, the idols also, accounts for the fact that we have no single extant example of a Teutonic idol. Still it is not hard to realize what these temples were like from the later Sagas. They consisted, it would seem, of two parts, a nave and a shrine, surmounted by a wooden palisading or enclosure.¹ The shrine was the true sanctuary. It was built round and arched. In it, in a half circle, on a raised platform, stood the images of the gods, and before them, in the middle of the half circle, was the altar. On it lay the holy ring, on which all solemn oaths were sworn. There too was the blood-bowl in which the blood of the slaughtered victims was caught, and the blood-twigg with which the worshippers were sprinkled, to hallow them as they stood in the outer court opposite the platform on which the gods were raised. On the altar burned the holy fire, which was never suffered to be quenched.²

The offerings presented in these temples consisted of all living things, sheep, oxen, swine, and especially horses, which were all fattened for the sacrifice. The horseflesh prohibited by the Christian missionaries was the flesh of the sacred horses offered before the heathen altars, and the offering of the horse was peculiarly characteristic of the Teutonic races. After

¹ Comp. Bede, 'H. E.,' iv. 13.

² Dasent's 'Burnt Njal,' i. xxxvii.

being brought before the images of the gods, the victims were slaughtered, the blood was caught in the blood-bowl, and sprinkled with the blood-twigs on the altar, the images, and the people. The fat of the victims was used for anointing the images, which were then rubbed dry and polished. The heads were by preference offered to the gods, and the hides were fixed or hung on trees in the sacred groves. The discovery of bones, but especially the teeth of ruminants, in our pagan English burial-grounds may be accounted for by the practice, forbidden by the clergy,¹ of placing the heads of animals slain in sacrifice on poles or stakes near the graves of the dead. Thus exposed to the effects of wind and weather, the teeth would become detached and strewn upon the ground, and as successive interments took place, would be mingled with the earth which filled the graves.²

The sacrifice was succeeded by the sacrificial feast. The flesh was boiled down in caldrons, which swung over fires lighted down the whole nave of the temple. Round these the worshippers took their seats, and ate the flesh and partook of the broth. Then the chief, to whom the temple belonged, rose from his high seat in the middle of the bench on the right

¹ See 'Bonifacii Ep.' lxxxii.

² Ackerman's 'Pagan Saxondom,' p. xvii.

hand of the nave, and blessed the meat and drink, and bade the guests drink in honour of the gods from cups of mead or beer. The first bowl for victory and strength was drained to Woden. The second to Freyr, for peace and good harvests. A third to Thor, and so on. The last cup was drunk to the memory of friends and kinsmen dead and gone.

Such were the usual sacrifices. But on great occasions human victims were also offered, particularly slaves and criminals. "Near every gathering-place of the tribe,"—a spot closely connected with the temple, "stood the stone of sacrifice, on which the backs of these victims were crushed and broken, and the holy pool, in which another kind of human sacrifices were solemnly sunk."¹ Such sacrifices, though allowable among all the Teutonic races, were not common. Human victims appear to have served often as sacrifices of atonement, being offered either to the malign deities, or on occasions of national calamity, or as propitiatory sacrifices for the dead in the nether world.

Such, roughly and briefly, is an outline of the Teutonic creed at the time of its contact with Christianity. While on the one hand it betrays a depth, a seriousness, a tendency to the mysterious, on the

¹ Dasent's 'Burnt Njal,' i. xxxviii.

other it betrays a feeling out after truths which the new Faith could alone supply. In the mythology of the Teutonic nations, the creation of the world occupies an important place, as also a sense of present disorder, and the existence of malevolent powers. We can dimly trace also a need of the interposition of a Deliverer, who shall stoop down from heaven and master Death, man's last enemy. Woden, indeed, descended to the abode of Hel to rescue Baldr. But he failed. He could not conquer death, and the beauteous god of light seemed doomed to lie for ever in the old kingdom of the dead. But the Teuton persisted in hoping against hope. He could not acquiesce, as man has never been able to acquiesce, in a religion of despair. It was whispered by those who knew the fates that Baldr would yet arise, not now, indeed, but in the after time, when "the twilight of the gods" was passed. Then, after awful prodigies, after the crash of a decayed and wicked world, in glory and joy he would return, and Allfadir's glorious kingdom shall be renewed ;

Then unsown
the swath shall flourish,
all bale mend, and
back come Baldr :
with him Hodr dwell
in Hropter's palace,

shrines of gods
the great and holy.

* * *

there the just shall
joy for ever,
and in pleasure
pass the ages.¹

With this consciousness of some present mysterious disorder, this dim hope of ultimate restoration, this feeling after some mighty conqueror in human form, this tendency to dwell on the dark secrets, the awful mysteries of the soul and life, the Teutonic peoples came into the presence of Christianity. How profoundly the lessons they learnt from Latin and Celtic teachers, who themselves had learnt them from the Psalms, the Gospels, the Epistles of St. Paul and St. John, affected the unfolding of their character; "how the tenderness, the sweetness, the earnestness, the solemnity, the awfulness of the Christian faith sunk into their hearts, diffused itself through their life, allied itself by indestructible bonds with what was dearest and what was highest, with their homes, their assemblies, their crowns, their graves—all this is marked in their history, and reveals itself in their literature."²

¹ Kemble's 'Saxons in England,' i. 412.

² Dean Church's 'Influences of Christianity,' p. 113.

CHAPTER III.

THE KENTISH MISSION.

IT seemed a dark hour in her history when Christianity put forth her first effort to restore England to its place in the commonwealth of nations, and to reclaim it from pagan barbarism. In the East she had lost the greater part of her dominion in two continents. Islamism had curtailed her borders alike in Asia and in Africa. In the West she was to find her compensation and her triumph.

To a Jutish chief, his Christian queen, and a monk in the famous monastery of St. Andrew, on the Coelian Mount at Rome, we owe the beginning of the first English mission. Who has not heard the story of Ethelbert and Bertha, of Gregory the Great and the boy-slaves he noticed in the market-place at Rome? The story has been told again and again. If it is repeated here, it is only because the narrative would be incomplete without it.

It was either shortly before A.D. 578, or soon after his return in A.D. 585, that Gregory was passing through the market-place at Rome, when it was

crowded with people attracted by the arrival of fresh cargoes of merchandise.¹ Amongst the bales of goods he saw three boys set for sale. They were white-complexioned, fair and light, and with noble heads of hair. Filled with compassion, Gregory inquired from what part of the world they had come, and was told "from Britain, where all the inhabitants have the same fair complexion." He next asked whether the people of this strange land were Christians or pagans, and hearing that they were pagans he heaved a deep sigh,² and remarked it was sad to think that beings so bright and fair should be in the power of the Prince of Darkness. He next inquired the name of their nation. "Angles," was the reply. "'Tis well," he answered, playing on the word "Rightly are they called *Angles*, for their faces are the faces of angels, and they ought to be fellow-heirs with the angels of heaven." "And what is the name," he proceeded, "of the province from which they have been brought?" "From Deira,"³ was the answer, the country between the Humber and the Tees, including Durham and Yorkshire. Catching its name he rejoined, "Rightly are they named

¹ 'Cum advenientibus *nuper* mercatoribus multa venalia in forum fuissent conlata.'—Bede, 'H. E.,' ii. 1.

² Bede, 'H. E.,' ii. 1.

³ 'Deirl,' Bede, 'H. E.,' ii. 1, *i.e.*, inhabitants of the British *Deur*, or *Deisyr*, Latinized into Deira.

Deirans. Plucked from *ire*, and called to the mercy of Christ." "And who," he asked once more, "is the king of this province?" "*Ælla*¹," was the reply. The word recalled the Hebrew expression of praise, and he answered, "*Allelujah!* the praise of God shall be chanted in that clime."

Years passed, but Gregory never forgot that moving sight in the Roman slave-market or the country of those fair-haired boys. At first he thought of going thither himself, and, "like a Christian Cæsar," winning over this remote and barbarous island. He extorted permission from the Pope to embark on the enterprise, and had actually travelled three days' journey thither when he was overtaken by messengers from the people of Rome, who clamoured for his return, and had compelled the Pope to revoke his permission.

So he was forced to go back. But in A.D. 590 he himself became Pope, and five years afterwards an opportunity presented itself of carrying out the desire of his heart. The most powerful king in Britain at this time was Ethelbert of Kent. He is reckoned as the third Bretwalda, and is said to have been lord over all the kings south of the Humber.

¹ King of Deira from A.D. 559 to 588. He was the son of Iffi, or Yffi, who is represented by Nennius as Hengist's nephew.

Twenty-five years before he had married Bertha, daughter of Charibert, one of the kings of the Franks in Gaul. As a condition of the marriage, it had been agreed that the queen should be allowed to practise her own religion without let or hindrance, and she had been attended to the court of her husband by a Frankish bishop named Luidhard. It is a sign of Ethelbert's tolerant spirit that he had allowed her to worship God in a little church near Canterbury, dedicated to St. Martin, and during a union of twenty years it is not improbable that she did what she could to influence her husband in favour of the Christian faith. That application had been already made to the Frankish bishops for Christian missionaries is a fact we learn from Gregory's letters,¹ and it is possible that it was news of this which induced him to write to Candidus, steward of his churches' estate in Gaul, to buy up English youths of seventeen or twenty years of age, that they might receive a Christian education, and become missionaries in their native land.

At length, in the sixth year of his pontificate, or A.D. 596, he resolved to take more direct steps, and from his own monastery on the Coelian hill he sent forth a band of forty monks, headed by their prior

¹ Greg. Epp., ii. 58.

Augustine,¹ to undertake a mission to the English. Early, therefore, in the year A.D. 596 they set out, and crossing the Alps reached Provence, and were welcomed gladly by Stephen, abbot of the famous monastery of Lerins,² as also by Protasius, bishop of Aix, and the provincial governor Arigius. Here, however, they received alarming accounts of the savage character of the distant islanders, and they prevailed on Augustine to return to Rome, and endeavour to obtain from Gregory a release from their arduous task. But the pontiff would allow of no "looking back" now they had once "put their hand to the plough." They were bidden to go forward, and to remember that the more arduous the labour the greater would be their future reward. Furnished, therefore, with letters to the bishops of Lyons, Tours, Marseilles, Arles, Vienne, Autun, and Aix, as also to Theoderic II. and Theodebert II., the boy-kings of Burgundy and of Austrasia, they travelled northward to Reims, Tours, and Paris, and after wintering in Gaul, crossed the Channel soon after Easter,³ A.D. 597, and landed at Ebbe's Fleet,⁴ in the Isle of Thanet.

¹ He had once been a pupil of Felix, bishop of Messana. Greg. Ep., xiv. 17. ² See 'Conversion of the Celts,' p. 43.

³ "Which fell, in A.D. 597, on April 14."—Bright's 'Early English Church History,' p. 46.

⁴ 'Heopwine's Fleot' (= harbour), Sax. Chion. ann. 449.

The "Isle of Thanet" was then really an island, and a broad stream flowed between Richborough and Reculver. Thus safely landed, they sent messengers to announce to Ethelbert that they had come from Rome, and were the bearers of joyful tidings, and could offer him an eternal kingdom in heaven. The coming of men of peace to a shore "still constantly swarming with fierce pirates,"¹ must have seemed strange to the Kentish king, and the name of Rome must have sounded full of awe to one who would have heard from Bertha of the great high-priest who ruled there. He therefore received their message in a kindly spirit, but begged that for the present they would remain on the other side of the Stour, and would abstain from entering Canterbury.

After a little while he came himself to the isle, and bade them tell him what tidings they had brought. But he met them in the open air. He would not encounter them under any roof, for, as a Teuton, he dreaded spells, and believed in "witch-lore,"² and knew not what charm or incantation they might work upon him. So with his attendant thanes he sat down either in the open space near Ebbes Fleet, or, according to another account, under an ancient

¹ Milman's 'Latin Christianity,' ii. 229.

² See above, p. 9.

oak in the middle of the island, and awaited their coming. To make a deeper impression on the monarch's mind, Augustine came up from the shore in solemn procession. First advanced a verger bearing a large silver cross ; then followed one bearing a board, on which was painted the figure of the Crucified ; next came the rest of the forty brethren chanting a solemn litany, "entreating the Lord for their own salvation, and that of those to whom they had come."¹ Arrived in the king's presence, they were bidden to seat themselves on the ground. Ethelbert himself could not understand Latin, and Augustine could not speak English. So a Gallic interpreter did his best to interpret, while Augustine explained the meaning of the picture then borne aloft, and preached the Word of Life, and Ethelbert hearkened to him. "Your words and promises," he at length answered, "sound very good unto me, but they are new and strange ; and I cannot believe them all at once, nor can I leave all that I and my fathers, and the whole English folk have believed so long. But I see that ye have come from a far country to tell us that which ye yourselves hold for truth ; so ye may stay in the land, and I will give you a house to dwell in and food to eat ; and ye may preach to my folk, and

¹ Bede, 'H. E.,' i. 25. For Gregory's advice respecting Litanies, see Ep. xi. 51.

if any man of them will believe as ye believe, I hinder him not.”¹

Then the procession was again formed, and Augustine and his companions, crossing the ferry to Richborough, advanced to the old Roman town of Dunoverum, which had become the “rude Burgh of the men of Kent,” and was then embosomed in thickets.² As they went they chanted a litany of the Rogation Days, “which they had probably heard in the previous spring on their arrival in Provence, and which long remained in the Rogation services of the Church of Lyons,—”³ “We beseech Thee, O Lord, for Thy great mercy, let Thine anger and wrath be turned away from this city, and from thy holy house, for we have sinned. Alleluia!” Thus with mingled thankfulness and humility they proceeded over the ground now called St. Alphage Lane, and took up their abode in the Stable-gate⁴ till the king should finally make up his mind.

Admitted into the city, the little band of missionaries devoted themselves to frequent prayers, watchings, and fastings, and commended the word they proclaimed by their own zeal and self-devotion.

¹ Bede, ‘H. E.,’ i. 25, translated by Freeman in his ‘Old English History,’ p. 47.

² Stanley’s ‘Memorials,’ p. 19.

³ Bright, p. 48.

⁴ See Smith’s note on Bede, ‘H. E.,’ i. 25.

Before long they were allowed to worship with the queen in the church of St. Martin, and the following Whitsuntide they were privileged to see the first-fruits of their labours. Ethelbert avowed himself ready to accept the Christian faith, and was baptized probably at St. Martin's church. It is allowable to believe that, like not a few of his subjects, he had been "feeling after God," and that "the serene brightness, the mysterious majesty, the unimaginable tenderness of the new faith had a fascinating power which became irresistible in connection with such signal purity and single-heartedness as the lives of its preachers displayed."¹ At any rate, the conversion of the Bretwalda had a great influence over his people. The Kentish men resorted day by day in great numbers to hear the Word,² and learnt more and more to detach themselves from their heathen rites, for Ethelbert did not, as many kings afterwards, force any man to do as he did and think as he thought.³

The baptism of Ethelbert coincided very nearly with the death of St. Columba in his distant monastery of Iona,⁴ and Augustine little knew what a noble

¹ Bright, p. 49.

² Bede, 'H. E.,' i. 26.

³ Contrast the conduct of Hacon of Norway, and the two Olafs, and see the 'Conversion of the Northmen.'

⁴ See the 'Conversion of the Celts,' p. 121.

career had ceased in that remote isle off the Scottish coast, though he himself was destined afterwards to behold representatives of the Celtic Church. For the present he was intent on carrying out the instructions of Gregory, that he should apply to the Gallic bishops for his consecration as bishop. Accordingly he repaired to the principal church in Southern Gaul, that of Arles,¹ and on the 16th of November, A.D. 597, was consecrated by Vergilius, the metropolitan of Arles, and other Frankish prelates, "Archbishop of the English." On his return he found cause for great joy. Already a multitude of new proselytes had joined the Church, and on Christmas Day following—as Gregory in a letter² informs his brother patriarch Eulogius of Alexandria—upwards of ten thousand of the men of Kent received baptism in the waters of the Swale, at the passage so called between Sheppey and the mainland. Established as bishop in Canterbury, Augustine took up his abode in the wooden palace of Ethelbert, while the king is said to have retired to Reculver. Near the palace in Canterbury stood the ruins of an old church built by Roman Christians. This, with the king's help, Augustine built, or rather repaired, and consecrated it to the honour of the "Holy Saviour, our God and Lord,"

¹ See the 'Conversion of the Celts,' p. 72.

² Greg. Epp., viii. 30.

the symbol of whose glorious Passion had been borne before him in procession into the strange city in the early summer. Thus rose the earliest representative, several times rebuilt since then, of our metropolitan Christ Church, the mother-church of English Christianity. Between the walls of Canterbury and St. Martin's was another building, once a British church, but now used as a heathen temple. This also Ethelbert made over to the archbishop, who dedicated it to St. Pancras, in memory of the young Roman martyr, whose family once owned the ground on which had been built St. Andrew's Monastery on the Cœlian Hill at Rome.

But now he thought it well to write to Gregory and inform him of the success of his mission. The bearers of the letter were Laurence, a priest, and Peter, a monk. They were to inform him how the race of the fair-haired slaves he had once pitied in the Roman slave-market had received the Faith, and how Augustine himself had been advanced to the episcopal dignity, and they were to consult him on several points as to the conduct of the Mission. The messengers went their way and delivered the letter. Gregory was rejoiced at the intelligence, and after an interval¹ sent over four fresh labourers for the Mission, Mellitus, Justus, Paulinus, and Rufinianus. With

¹ Of three years, on which see Bright, p. 55.

them they brought ecclesiastical vestments, sacred vessels, some relics of apostles and martyrs, a present of books, and the pall of a metropolitan for Augustine, thus making him independent of the bishops of France. In a lengthy epistle Gregory marked out the lines of development for the English mission. London, according to this scheme, was to be his metropolitan seat, and he was to consecrate twelve bishops as his suffragans. Moreover he was to consecrate a bishop for York, who also in his turn was to consecrate twelve suffragans, and act as their metropolitan.

As to the revenues of the Church, respecting which Augustine had consulted him, he directed that the Roman custom should be followed, and that they should be divided into four portions, one to the bishop and his household for the purpose of maintaining hospitality; another to the clergy; another to the poor; and the rest to the repair and maintenance of the church fabric. Augustine himself, as a monk, would continue to live in community with his clergy,¹ and so preserve the tradition of the early Christians who "had all things in common." Clerks in minor orders might marry and live outside the bishop's household, and receive their usual stipends, but care was to be taken that they lived under ecclesiastical

¹ Bede, 'H. E.,' i. 27.

rule, and consecrated their lives by devotional offices and purity of conduct. As to the variety of "rites" which Augustine had noticed in southern and central Gaul, and which Bertha probably followed in her church of St. Martin, differing as they did from the Roman use, he was directed to select from the best usages of Rome, of Gaul, or of other Churches whatever appeared to him to be pious, religious, and right, and establish it as the liturgy of the English Church, ever bearing in mind as a guiding principle that "things are not to be loved on account of places, but places on account of good things."¹ As to theft from a church, the motive ought to be a subject of diligent inquiry, and allowance made for the temptations of poverty, while charity ought to be the motive and regulating principle of all discipline. A man could not possibly be allowed to contract marriage with his step-mother; the Roman secular law allowed the marriage of first cousins, but on natural and on religious grounds Gregory viewed such unions with disfavour.² As to his dealings with bishops in Gaul and Britain, in the former country he could have no manner of jurisdiction; should he visit it, he might give brotherly counsel to the bishop of Arles, but with his metropolitan authority he could not interfere.

¹ Bede, 'H. E.,' i. 27.

² Ibid.

In the latter country, the British bishops were all committed to his care, "that the unlearned might be instructed, the weak strengthened by persuasion, the perverse corrected by authority."

At the same time Gregory addressed letters to Ethelbert and Bertha. The former he exhorted to follow the example of the first Christian emperor, Constantine, to suppress the worship of idols, and overthrow the heathen temples.¹ The latter he gently rebukes for her apparent tardiness in support of the English Mission, and bids her take Helena, the mother of Constantine, as her model,² and atone for her past neglect by greater zeal in future. With these epistles, and commendatory letters to eleven Gallic bishops and various Frankish kings, the four fresh labourers in the mission field set out from Rome, A.D. 601.

Some weeks passed away, and Gregory, receiving no tidings, became anxious about their safety.³ He had also in the interval reconsidered his advice respecting the destruction of the heathen temples. He wrote, therefore, to Mellitus, bidding him tell Augustine, when he saw him, to destroy not the temples, but only the idols within them. The structures them-

¹ Bede, 'H. E.,' i. 32; comp. ii. 13, 15; iii. 30.

² Greg. Epp., xi. 29.

³ Bede, 'H. E.,' i. 30.

selves, if solidly built, should be cleansed with holy water and hallowed for Christian worship. In like manner the heathen festivals, instead of being rudely abolished, might be devoted to Christian service and the celebration of the festival of the saints, "for," as he argues, "you cannot cut off everything at once from rude natures; he who would climb to a height must ascend step by step, and not by leaps and bounds."¹

With these letters Mellitus and his companions arrived in England about the end of the year A.D. 601. The staff of his mission being thus reinforced, and the course he was to pursue having been clearly defined, one of Augustine's first acts was to invite the British clergy to a conference, which was arranged to take place at a spot still called, in Bede's time, "Augustine's Oak," on the confines of the Hwiccians and the West-Saxons, probably Aust or Austcliff, nearly opposite to Chepstow.² We do not know the

¹ "Of the numerous places bearing the name of *Holy Well*, *Holy Island*, and *Holy Hill*, many were probably the sites of an ancient pagan cultus, to which, in accordance with Gregory's well-weighed instructions, a Christian import was given by Augustine and his brother missionaries." — Isaac Taylor's 'Words and Places,' p. 351.

² "The Hwiccians dwelt along the southern bank of the Severn, so as to include Gloucester, Malmesbury, Bath, and Cirencester, in their district, as Bede knew it in his time; but in Augustine's time this district was mainly West-Saxon, the

names of the Welsh bishops who were invited to the conference. But probably only the bishops of South Wales, of Gwent or Monmouthshire and Brecknockshire, of Morganwg or Glamorganshire, of Dyfed or Pembrokeshire with part of Caermarthenshire, were asked to take part.¹ It must have been with strange feelings that the Welsh prelates, "doubtless provided with assurance of safety," crossed the frontier into the land of the Saxon "robbers," to confer with "a bishop of the English, who derived his authority from Rome."

Prepared to make considerable concessions, Augustine felt that on three points he must stand firm. He proposed that the British Church should (1) conform to the Roman custom as to the mode of reckoning Easter; (2) the use of trine immersion at baptism,² and the Roman tonsure; and (3) that the Celtic bishops should aid him in evangelizing the heathen English. The discussion was long and unavailing. Neither

battle of Dyrham having pushed the Britons westward; and Augustine therefore had to pass through a long tract of West-Saxon territory under the rule of the 'ceaseless fighter' Celolwulf."—Bright, pp. 74, 75.

¹ "If there was a successor of David at Menevia, he would probably accompany the successor of Dubricius. Caerleon was evidently merged in Llandaff; but there is some reason to think that there were bishoprics at Llanafanfaur, at Margam, and perhaps at Weeg, in Herefordshire."—Bright, p. 75.

² Haddan and Stubbs, i. 153.

party would yield. At length, according to a Canterbury tradition current in the time of Bede, Augustine proposed that an appeal should be made to the Divine judgment. A blind man of English race was introduced. The British priests failed to cure him. Augustine prayed, and forthwith he received his sight.

Another meeting was proposed. Besides the prelates of South Wales, there now came the bishops of Llanbadarn,¹ of Bangor, and Llan Elwy, or St. Asaph, together with many learned men from the great monastery of Bangor Iscoed then under the rule of Abbot Dunod, or Dinoot, as Bede calls him. Before the conference met, they proposed to ask the advice of one of the hermits, so much honoured in Wales, whether they ought to change the customs of their fathers. "Yea," replied the aged hermit,² "if the new comer be a man of God." "But how," they asked, "are we to know whether he be a man of God?" "Our Lord," was the reply, "hath said, take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly of heart. Now, if this Augustine is meek and lowly, be sure that he beareth the yoke of Christ and is offering His yoke to you. But if

¹ See 'Conversion of the Celts,' p. 63.

² For hermit-life in Wales, see 'Conversion of the Celts,' p. 52.

he is harsh and proud, it is plain that he is not from God, and we need not give ear to his words." "Nay, but how are we to discern this?" they asked again. "Manage," replied the oracle, "that he arrive at the place of meeting first. If he riseth to meet you when ye approach, be sure that he is a servant of Christ, hear and follow him; but if he despiseth you, and faileth to rise up from his place, let him also be despised by you." ¹

The synod met and Augustine remained seated, nor did he rise at the approach of the Welsh prelates. It was enough. It was clear that he had not the Spirit of Christ, and no efforts of the archbishop could induce them to yield one of his demands. "If he will not so much as rise up to greet us," said they, "how much more will he despise us if we submit ourselves to him?" ² Thereupon Augustine broke up the conference. He was stirred to anger not so much by their defiance of his authority, as by their refusal to aid him in his missionary work. "If ye will not accept peace with brethren," said he, "ye will have to accept war from enemies. If ye will not preach the way of life to the English, ye will be punished with death by English hands." These words were afterwards regarded as prophetic, and were thought to have been fulfilled, when some

¹ Bede, 'H. E.,' ii. 2.

² Ibid.

years after Augustine's death, or A.D. 613, Ethelfrith, the heathen king of the Northumbrians, came and fought with the Welsh by Caerleon on the Dee, or Chester, and when he saw many monks from the neighbouring monastery of Bangor Iscoed, praying for the success of their countrymen, he said, "If these men pray to their God that we may be beaten, it is all one as if they were fighting against us." Whereupon he fell upon the monks, and slew them first of all, and laid Bangor Iscoed in ruins, and took and destroyed Chester.¹

Unsuccessful in the object of the conference, Augustine returned to Canterbury, and there continued his exertions to evangelize the heathen around. Before long, as all Kent had espoused the Faith, it was deemed advisable to erect a second bishopric at Rochester,² or "Hrof's Castle." Here Augustine placed his companion Justus, and Ethelbert built a church, which, in remembrance of his Roman monastery at the Cælian Hill, Augustine named after St. Andrew. At the same time, through the connection of Ethelbert with the under king of Essex, who was his nephew, Christianity found its way into his dominions, and Mellitus was sent to London as

¹ See Freeman's 'Old English History,' p. 50, *n*.

² Called Durobrivæ in British times, from the "swift stream" of the Medway.

bishop in A.D. 604, where a cathedral church was erected on the site of the present St. Paul's, which had formerly been occupied by a Roman camp.¹

This was the extent of Augustine's success. It fell indeed far short of Gregory's grand designs. The "fair vision" of twelve bishops under the metropolitan of London, and twelve more under a bishop sent by him to York, was never realized. But the scheme of the Roman Pontiff had been formed on a very imperfect acquaintance with the condition of the island, the prejudices of the British Christians, and the relations of the various English kingdoms to each other. Canterbury, not London, became the metropolitan seat. The mission of Augustine did not succeed in planting more than *two* bishoprics, and the idea of the sees dependent on York did not even approach its realization.

On the 12th of March, A.D. 604, Gregory the Great died, and two months afterwards, according to one account,² or a year afterwards, according to others, Augustine, who had consecrated his friend Laurence to be his successor, followed his patron and benefactor, and was buried in the cemetery, which he himself had hallowed, outside the walls of Canterbury. The period

¹ On the story of the temple of Diana, supposed to have stood there, see Milman's 'Annals of St. Paul's,' p. 5.

² For the discussion of the date see Bright, pp. 91, 92.

allotted to him for his work had been but brief, but, at any rate, he had laid the foundations of the greater structure to be reared after him. He may not have been a Boniface¹ or an Anskar.² But we are bound to make no unfriendly estimate of his labours and the success they achieved. He had converted a Kentish king and baptized multitudes of his people. He had secured a rational recognition for the Christian Faith, and planted offshoots of the Kentish Mission in Rochester and London. "Practically his landing had renewed the union with the Western world which that of Hengist had destroyed. The new England was admitted into the older commonwealth of nations. The civilization, art, letters, which had fled before the sword of the English Conquest, returned with the Christian Faith."³

¹ See the 'Conversion of the Teutons on the Continent,' p. 94.

² See the 'Conversion of the Northmen,' p. 7.

³ Green's 'History of the English People,' i. p. 42.

CHAPTER IV

THE ROMAN MISSION IN NORTHUMBRIA.

AUGUSTINE could hardly have divined, when he consecrated Laurence as his successor, that the centre of interest of the English Mission would soon shift from the little kingdom of Kent to the northern kingdom of Northumbria.

The reason of this will appear in the course of the present chapter.

The new primate commenced his work not only with strenuous efforts to extend the Church amongst the heathen English, but also by making a great attempt to obtain the co-operation of the Celtic bishops in their evangelization. But he was doomed, like his predecessor, to disappointment. If he imagined that the Irish prelates would be more amenable than the Welsh, he was speedily disenchanted. There arrived at Canterbury¹ an Irish bishop of Inverdaoile, in Wexford, named Dagan, for the purpose apparently of conferring with the heads of

¹ Bede, 'H. E.,' ii. 4. Inverdaoile is now Ennereilly, in the barony of Arklow.

the English Mission. But he was so annoyed at the line taken in the discussion, that he flatly refused even to eat in the same place with them,¹ and Laurence gained nothing by an earnest letter to the bishops and abbots throughout Ireland, urging them to union in Catholic observances with the other continental churches.

In A.D. 608 Bishop Mellitus undertook a journey to Rome to consult with Pope Boniface IV. on the affairs of the English Mission. He was received with all respect, and he returned in A.D. 610 with a letter to Ethelbert, and others for Laurence and his clergy. He doubtless expected that fresh ground might speedily be broken and further success achieved. But he was to learn that if the truth goes forth "conquering and to conquer," yet it has its defeats and its dark days before the complete triumph arrives, that "the corn of wheat" must die, or appear to die, before it bears much fruit.²

On the 24th of February, A.D. 616, Ethelbert departed this life, and, in the words of Fuller, it soon appeared "as though much of Christianity was buried in his grave." His son Eadbald absolutely refused to walk in the new ways. He would have nothing but the old worship, and he set Christian ways at defiance by

¹ Bede, 'H. E.,' ii. 4.

² Archbishop Trench's 'Mediæval Church History,' p. 33.

marrying the successor of Bertha, his father's widow.¹ At the same time troubles arose in Essex. Sabert died, and his three sons openly re-adopted the old idolatry. On one occasion they entered St. Paul's Church, while the bishop was celebrating the Holy Eucharist. "Why dost thou not give us," they asked, "a share in the white bread, which thou wast wont to give to our father?" "If ye are willing to be baptized," calmly replied the bishop, "in the same water of salvation in which your father was baptized, ye may also partake of the same holy Bread, of which he was wont to partake. But if ye despise the laver of life, ye cannot receive the bread of life." Enraged at his refusal, and protesting that they needed not such baptism, they answered him, "If thou hast no mind to yield to us in so small a matter, thou shalt not remain in our province," and they commanded him to leave the kingdom.

Thus driven forth, Mellitus hastened to Canterbury. Thither Laurence summoned Justus from Rochester, and together the three prelates debated on the course to be adopted. After sorrowful consultation, it was resolved to return to Italy and give up the mission amongst "barbarians," who had fallen away from the faith. Accordingly Mellitus and Justus

The custom seems to have been regular among the Teutonic tribes, that a son should marry his step-mother.

crossed over to Gaul, intending there to abide and wait the issue of events.

Meanwhile Laurence was on the point of following them, but on the night before he was to sail, he slept within the Church of St. Peter and St. Paul, where he had caused his bed to be prepared. But as he slept, so Bede learnt from his informants,¹ St. Peter appeared to him, and sternly warned him not to forsake the flock over which he had been appointed overseer, and as a proof of the heavenly vision, displayed to Eadbald in the morning his back scarred with the stripes which the Prince of the Apostles had inflicted on him for his cowardice. Whether the story is to be attributed to superstition or artifice, it had the effect of rousing all the fears of Eadbald. Deeply awed, he abjured his idols, renounced his unlawful marriage, sent to recall Mellitus and Justus, and reinstated the latter in the see of Rochester. But he had not the hold or the influence which his father had wielded over Essex. There all efforts to restore the faith were unavailing. In a battle with the West Saxons the young princes who had driven out Mellitus perished, and however much their successor, Sigebert, may have wished to walk in the ways of Sabert, the men of London would not have

¹ Bede, 'H. E.,' ii. 6.

Mellitus back amongst them, and preferred to adhere to their native faith.

While the Kentish Church was thus struggling, all hope of immediate extension in the neighbouring kingdoms seemed to be cut off, but the primacy of Justus, who succeeded Mellitus in A.D. 624, was marked by an unexpected extension in the northern part of the island, an encouragement which he may well have needed after twenty-three years of experience, and patient labour.¹ Ethelburga, the sister of Eadbald, had married Edwin, king of Northumbria. In her case, as in that of Bertha, it had been expressly stipulated that she should be allowed the free exercise of her religion, and Paulinus, who had come from Rome with Justus in A.D. 601, was raised by him to the episcopate that he might be to her in her Northumbrian home what Luidhard had been to her mother, when Kent was still heathen.

The life of Edwin had been chequered by strange vicissitudes. When only three years old, his kingdom had been seized by Ethelfrith, king of Bernicia, and they who were in charge of the child fled with him to the court of Cadvan, a king of North Wales. There he had been educated by the British clergy, and when he came to man's estate, he sought refuge with

¹ Bright, p. 110. The need of perseverance is dwelt on strongly in the letter of Boniface to Justus. Bede, 'H. E.' ii. 8.

Redwald, king of the East Angles. But Ethelfrith heard of his retreat and sent twice to demand that he should be delivered into his hand. Twice Redwald refused; but when the messengers came the third time, the offer of a still greater reward, and the threat of war if he persisted in befriending the stranger, made him pause, and he promised either to slay Edwin or to deliver him into their hands. But that night a friend, who had heard all that Redwald had said, informed Edwin of the king's resolve, and offered him a secure retreat. This was declined on the plea, that if he must die he would rather fall by the hand of Redwald than of any meaner man.

So he sat upon a stone before the house, sad and disconsolate, not knowing whither to turn his steps, when suddenly, in the stillness of the night, there stood by him, as he thought, a strange man in strange attire, who not only promised to plead his cause before Redwald, but hinted darkly that he would be set again on his father's throne, and become mightier than all the kings that had gone before him, and asked, "When he who hath promised thee all these things, shall tell thee of a new life and a new law better than any thy fathers have known, wilt thou obey him and take heed unto his words?" Thereupon Edwin promised, and the stranger seemed to lay his hand upon his head, and said, "When this sign shall come

unto thee, remember this hour, thy words and thy promise," and forthwith vanished out of his sight.

Edwin was still sitting on the stone before the house when his friend returned, and told him that the king's heart was changed, and he had resolved not to give him up, and not only to protect him, but to go forth against Ethelfrith and meet him in battle. And true to his word, he gathered all his forces and fell upon Ethelfrith before he had time to complete his preparations, and defeated him in a great battle by the river Idle, not far from Retford.

Thus Edwin, the outlaw and the fugitive, became sovereign of the whole region of Northumbria, and united Deira, which was his by inheritance, to the territory of Bernicia, and reigned over the mightiest kingdom of all in the island. Not only did he make peace throughout his dominions, so that a woman with her babe could pass unharmed from the one end of his realm to the other, but he began to assume something of the state of the Roman Cæsars. "A royal standard of purple and gold floated before him as he rode through the villages; a feather-tuft attached to a spear, the Roman tufa, preceded him as he walked through the streets. The Northumbrian king was in fact supreme over Britain as no king of English blood had been before. Northward his fame reached the Forth, and was guarded by a city which bore his

name, Edinburgh, "Eadwin's-burgh." Westward he was master of Chester, and the fleet he equipped there subdued the isles of Anglesea¹ and Man.

South of the Humber he was owned as overlord by the whole English race, save Kent, and Ead-bald, as we have seen, had given him his sister to be his queen. The year after his marriage, on Easter eve, an envoy sent by Cwichelm, king of the West Saxons, struck at him with a poisoned, two-edged dagger, but Lilla, the king's thane, threw himself before him and received the blow in his stead and died. The same night his new queen was safely delivered of a daughter, and Edwin gave great thanks to Woden and all his gods. But Paulinus, whom men long remembered,

"Of shoulders curved, and stature tall,
Black hair, and vivid eye, and meagre cheek,"²

bade him give thanks to the Lord Christ, for *He*, not Woden, had given him his babe, and preserved his queen in the great pain and peril of childbirth. Thereupon Edwin replied, "I go forth to battle with the king of the West Saxons, who hath sought to slay me by guile. If I return victorious, then will I

¹ No longer known as Mona, but as the "Isle of the English."
See Green's 'History of the English People,' i. 44.

² Wordsworth's 'Eccl. Sonnets,' No. 15.

take thy Christ for my Lord." As an earnest of his words, he gave over the infant to Paulinus, and on Whitsun-eve she was baptized, with eleven others of the household. Then, when his wound was healed, Edwin went forth against Cwichelm, and slew him and his under-kings, and defeated his army with a great slaughter, and returned in triumph. But he did not at once receive baptism, though he no more served Woden and the gods of his fathers. Thoughtful and cautious, he pondered¹ over the words of Paulinus, till one day the bishop came to him and laid his hand upon his head, saying, "Knowest thou this sign?" The king trembled and fell at his feet. But Paulinus raised him up, and bade him be of good cheer, for the Lord whom he served had given him all his power, and now bade him do as he had promised that sad night when he was looking forward to nought but death.

Edwin promised to obey his words, but first declared he would submit the question of the acceptance of the new faith to the council of his wise men, who also, if like-minded, might become Christians. Paulinus, who, we may believe, was the mysterious stranger² on that memorable night, gave his assent, and the king's aldermen and thanes, and wise men,

¹ Bede, 'H. E.,' ii. 9.

² Haddan and Stubbs, iii. 75.

met to take counsel at Godmundingham, now Goodmundham,¹ little more than twenty miles from York. Here was enacted one of the most striking scenes in the whole history of missionary enterprise. After the question, whether the new ways should be adopted or the old belief retained, had been much debated, Coifi,² the high priest of Woden, rose up, and frankly avowing his interested motives, declared that no one had served the gods more truly than he had done, and yet many men were richer and greater than he, and enjoyed more of the king's favour. If the old deities retained any real power, they ought to have made him greater and richer than all other men. Wherefore he counselled that they should listen to those who could tell them what the new lore was good for, and if they found it better than their own, that they should straightway follow it.

But amongst the king's thanes was one who struck a deeper chord, and suggested far different reasons

¹ It was a mile from Weighton, which denotes "a sacred enclosure." Godmundingham has been explained as the home under the *mund* or protection of the gods, but also as the home of the sons of Godmund. *Godney*, near Glastonbury, *Godmanchester*, in Huntingdonshire, *Godmanstone*, in Dorset, *Godley*, in Cheshire, *Godstow*, near Oxford, *Godshill*, in the Isle of Wight, and *Godstone*, in Surrey, were probably, like Godmundham, pagan sites consecrated to Christian worship.

² The word, says Kemble, is equivalent to *Coefig* or *Cêfig*, and denotes the "bold," or "active one."

why they should hearken to the preachers of the new faith. "The life of man in this world, O king," said he, "may be likened to what happeneth when thou art sitting at supper with thy thanes in the time of winter; a fire is blazing on the hearth, and the hall is warm; without, the rain and the snow are falling, and the wind is howling; there cometh a sparrow and flieth through the house; she entereth by one door and goeth out by another; while she is within the house, she feeleth not the howling blast, but when the short space of rest is passed, she flieth out again into the storm, and passeth away from our eyes. Even so is it with the brief life of man; it appeareth for a little while, but what precedeth it or what cometh after it we know not at all. Wherefore, if this new lore can tell us aught, let us hearken to it and follow it."

So he spoke, and stirred many thoughts in the hearts of the assembled thanes. Then Coifi rose again and advised that they should hearken to Paulinus, while he explained the new doctrine to them. Then the bishop preached the Gospel to them; and when he had ended, the high priest broke out again, "Long since have I known full well that what we have been worshipping is naught, and the more diligently I sought after truth therein, the less I found it. But now in what this stranger preacheth, I openly

confess there shineth forth such truth as can confer on us life, salvation, and eternal happiness. I advise, therefore, O king, that we straightway break and burn down those temples and altars which we have hallowed, and whence we have gained no good."

But who would venture to throw down the altar and the temple, and the hedge round about them? ¹ This Coifi declared himself ready to do at once, and he begged of the king a horse and weapons, that he might ride to the temple of Woden and throw it down. The multitude thought that Coifi, who, as chief priest, was forbidden by the laws to carry arms or to ride, except on a mare, was mad. But he girded on the sword, and took and went forth to the temple at Godmundingham, and when he drew near, he hurled his spear at it, and then he bade his men break down and burn the temple with the hedge ² surrounding it. Thus did Northumbria accept Christianity by a national act. King Edwin hastily built a small church of wood in the city of York, which he dedicated to St. Peter, and there ³ he was instructed as a catechumen, and received baptism on Easter Eve, April 11, A.D. 627. Many of his nobles and

Bede, 'H. E.,' ii. 13.

² "Cum omnibus septis suis," Bede, 'H. E.,' the "frith-geard," or "healh-tun."

³ Bede, 'H. E.,' ii. 14.

people were baptized with him, and amongst the rest was his grand-niece Hilda, the future abbess of Whitby.¹ Paulinus was now established as bishop of York, and began to build a larger and more imposing church of stone, square in form, enclosing the wooden one where he had been baptized.

Thus at length the Kentish mission succeeded in establishing an offshoot in the mightiest kingdom of England. Paulinus was instant in season and out of season, and travelled from town to town preaching, catechising, and baptizing. In one of his missionary journeys we are told he was occupied for six-and-thirty consecutive days, from early morn until night-fall, in instructing the people, who flocked to him from all the villages and towns, and when they had been duly prepared, in baptizing them in the waters of the Glen, which flowed by the royal "vill" of Yevering in Glendale. As bishop, however, of York, he naturally occupied himself especially with Deira, and at Catterick on the Swale, and Donafeld, by some identified with Doncaster, found himself able to reproduce the scenes which had rendered the Glen so memorable. But his activity bore him to other places also. He visited Lincoln, where not only Blæcca the reeve was converted and began to build a stone church of mean workmanship,² but Honorius

¹ Bede, 'H. E.,' iv. 23.

² Ibid., ii. 16.

the fifth archbishop of Canterbury was consecrated, in place of Justus, who died A.D. 627. We find him also at Southwell, in Nottinghamshire, where the minster of St. Mary¹ has always claimed Paulinus as its founder, and where he baptized a multitude of people in the Trent.

The king himself was also active in extending Christianity beyond the borders of Northumbria, and especially to the kingdom of the East Angles, where he had spent so many unhappy days. His old protector Redwald had been succeeded by his son Eorpwald, whom "he persuaded, with his province, to embrace the faith."² But the East Anglian nobles opposed the change, and Eorpwald was before long murdered by a heathen assassin. Then for three years East Anglia relapsed into paganism, but the good king of Northumbria lived long enough to hear of the restoration of Christianity. In the year A.D. 630, Eorpwald's half-brother Sigebert, who had been baptized while an exile in Gaul, took possession of the throne, and resolved to carry on the work which his brother had risked his life by beginning. Just at this time there arrived at Canterbury a bishop named Felix, from Burgundy. He felt strongly drawn towards the English Mission, and by the advice of

¹ Bright, p. 123; Rane, i. 43.

² Bede, 'H. E.,' ii. 15.

Honorius, repaired to East Anglia. Sigebert found in him a congenial helper, and placed him as bishop at Dunwich, on the Suffolk coast, where for seventeen years he did all in his power to build up the Church and reclaim the people from heathenism. At Dunwich he opened a school on the model of those which he had seen in Gaul, and which had been reproduced at Canterbury. About two years after the coming of Felix, another band of labourers arrived, not from Canterbury or Gaul, but from Ireland. These were an Irish monk named Fursey, with two brothers¹ of his and two priests. Fursey was a man of much learning. He built a monastery at Burgh Castle, in Suffolk, and by his life and doctrine contributed much to the spread of the Gospel. His missionary tours, which extended over a period of fifteen years, have been described in glowing terms by Bede, and were productive of great benefits alike to the heathen and the Christians of East Anglia.

But while the Church in East Anglia was enjoying the blessing of "godly quietness," a terrible calamity befell the cause of Christianity in Northumbria. "It seems," it has been said, "an almost universal law of mission work, that the definitive victory is not won without a temporary reaction of more or less

¹ His brothers were Fallan and Ultan, the priests Gobban and Dicul.

severity. The powers of darkness, seen and unseen, the spiritual wickednesses which constitute the real background of every form of heathenism, these, with all whom they can enlist in their ranks, gather themselves up, as with the energy of despair, for a last and decisive struggle with the Kingdom of Light. A fierce tempest of wrath sweeps over the Church, and the patient work of years perishes, or seems to perish, in an hour.”¹ What in our own days we have seen in part in New Zealand and Madagascar, now took place in England. The reaction which we have already observed in Kent, Essex, and East Anglia came to a head in the youngest of the Anglian kingdoms.

Cadwallon, king of Gwynned, or North Wales, had been defeated by Edwin at Morpeth, and driven into the isle of Priestholm, near Anglesey, and thence to Ireland. He returned thirsting for revenge, and Christian though he was, did not scruple to ally himself with a heathen chief, Penda, king of the Mercians, whose fierce energy and martial prowess rallied the forces of the old religion to his banner, and seemed destined to restore the faith of Thor and Woden in the land. Penda began his reign A.D. 626, and two years afterwards tore from Wessex the country of the Hwiccias and Magesætas on the

¹ Archbp. Trench's 'Mediæval Church History,' p. 34. .

Severn. Five years afterwards he joined his forces with Cadwallon, and attacked Edwin at Heathfield, or Hatfield, in South-Eastern Yorkshire, and slew him, and dispersed or destroyed his whole army,¹ while the Welsh king "spared neither women nor children, but put them to torturing deaths, raging for a time through all the country, and resolving that he would be the man to exterminate the whole English race within the bounds of Britain."

Paulinus, when he beheld the head of his late patron brought to York, and heard of the apostasy of Osric, prince of Bernicia, and Eanfrid, prince of Deira, may well have thought that evil days had come. From the invasion, which spread everywhere ruin and desolation, he deemed it his duty to fly, and setting sail with the widowed Ethelburga, whom he had escorted to Northumbria, and her younger son and daughter, arrived safely in Kent, where he accepted from Honorius and Eadbald the see of Rochester, which had been so long vacant. While Ethelburga was founding a convent at Lyminge,² and striving to forget her trials and sorrows,

¹ Bede, 'H. E.,' ii. 20.

² "Where the place of her burial is marked by a wooden tablet on the south wall of the church, and her name of endearment is still perpetuated in a neighbouring common called 'Tatta's Lea.' 'St. Ethelburga's Well' is to the east of the church."—Bright, p. 130.

Penda was still carrying on his remorseless wars, and seemed on the point of uniting the whole English nation under one sceptre, of making Mercia what Wessex became afterwards, and plucking the faith of Christ out of the land before it had well taken root.¹

¹ Freeman's 'Norman Conquest,' i. 37.

CHAPTER V.

THE CELTIC MISSION IN NORTHUMBRIA.

BUT it is ever the darkest hour that precedes the dawn. It was impossible that England should now fall back under the rule of a mere heathen conqueror. Though Paulinus had fled, the Northumbrian Church had still in James the Deacon, otherwise known as "The Chanter," from his skill in Roman church music, a noble representative of true courage and steadfastness in the midst of the severest trials. He remained staunchly at his post, keeping alive the spark of faith, and continuing still to "spoil the enemy by teaching and baptizing."¹ After a year of anarchy, Oswald, the second son of Ethelfrith, became king of Bernicia. Cadwallon and his Welsh warriors had remained encamped in the heart of the north, and with him Oswald fought his first fight.

On a rising ground, a few miles from Hexham, near the Roman Wall, he gathered, in A.D. 634, a small Northumbrian force, which pledged itself to become Christian if it conquered in the engagement. Causing

¹ Bede, 'H. E.,' ii. 20.

a cross of wood to be hastily made, and digging a hole for it in the earth, he supported it with his own hands while his men heaped up the soil around it. Then he bade his soldiers kneel with him and entreat the true and living God to defend their cause, which he knew to be just, from the fierce and boastful foe.¹ This done they joined battle, and attacked Cadwallon's far superior forces. The charge was irresistible. The Welsh army fled down the slope towards the Denisburn, a brook near Dilston, and Cadwallon himself was slain. This was the battle of "Heaven's Field," as after-times called it. Not only was the last hero of the old British races utterly routed, but Oswald, king of once more reunited Bernicia and Deira, proved himself to the Christian cause all that Edwin had been, and more, a prince in the prime of life, and fitted by his many good qualities "to attract a general enthusiasm of admiration, reverence, and love."

Like Edwin before him, he had in his earlier years been an exile, and had received instruction in the Columbian monasteries. Resolved to restore the national Christianity, he naturally turned to the teachers of his youth for missionaries to accomplish the holy work, and now the place of the Kentish Church in the conversion of northern England was taken by men trained in the famous mission-station of Iona.

¹ Bede, 'H. E.,' iii, 2.

He sent messages, therefore, to Seghine, fifth abbot of Hy, and requested aid in the instruction of his subjects. In accordance with his wish, the abbot sent him a bishop,¹ whom Hector Boethius names Corman. But he, after preaching the Word some time with little success, returned in deep disappointment to his sea-girt home, declaring that the barbarity of the people of Durham and Yorkshire was unendurable. "*Hard with hard makes no wall*," says Fuller quaintly, quoting the old proverb, "and no wonder, if the spiritual building went on no better, wherein the austerity and harshness of the pastor met with the ignorance and sturdiness of the people." The intelligence was received with sorrow, and the brethren of Hy grieved for the lot of the Northumbrians, and were still eager to help them. At length a voice was heard, saying, "Methinks, brother, thou hast been harsher than was fitting towards thy untaught hearers. Hast thou not forgotten the maxim of the apostle about milk for babes, that by degrees they may be nourished with the divine Word, and enabled to receive the more perfect and keep the higher precepts of God?"

All eyes were turned towards the speaker. It was Aidan, a brother of the community, and of the same lineage as St. Brigid and other distinguished saints.²

¹ Bede, 'H. E.,' iii. 5; see Gird., i. 75.

² Reeve's 'Adamnan,' p. 374.

Every one agreed that he was the man to undertake the work. So he was at once consecrated bishop, probably by one or more of the bishops resident at Hy, and in the summer of A.D. 635 proceeded to Northumbria. He did not settle in York, the capital of the kingdom, but, as Columba had chosen Hy, and David the remote and lonely Menevia,¹ so he was attracted to a spot on the Northumbrian coast, "twice a day contiguous to the mainland, and twice a day like an island enclosed in the sea, according to the ebb and flow of the tide."² This was the island-peninsula of Lindisfarne, so called from the little river Lindis, which here entered the sea, and the Celtic "Fahren," "a recess." Near at hand, and somewhat to the south, was the fortress-rock of Bamborough, where rose

" King Ida's castle, huge and square,"

built on the site, it is said, of a Roman fortress, which had been founded by Agricola, and called "Bebbanburgh," from Bebba, the first queen of King Ethelfrith. Here the bishop established his head-quarters, and

¹ See 'The Conversion of the Celts,' p. 61.

² Bede, 'H. E.,' iii. 3. Comp. Scott's 'Marmion,' canto ii.

" For, with the flow and ebb, its style
Varies from continent to isle ;
Dry-shod, o'er sands, twice every day,
The pilgrims to the shrine find way;
Twice ev'ry day the waves efface
Of staves and sandall'd feet the trace."

here he built his first humble church of split oak, and thatched with coarse grass, probably the "wiry bent," which grows in such abundance on the island. Under its shadow he established a company of monks, fellow-workers from his old country,¹ who lived according to the rules of St. Columba, and went forth at his bidding over the heathen realms, and a school of English boys, twelve in number, whom, like Bishop Selwyn since in New Zealand, and Bishop Patteson in the Melanesian islands, he sought to train up to be in their turn evangelists to their own people. He himself set a conspicuous example to all of zeal and devotion. He wandered on foot from place to place, preaching among the peasants of Yorkshire and Northumbria. Feeling for the weakness of a new-born faith, he was wont, not only to teach the people committed to his charge, but also to go into the houses of the faithful, and to sow the seeds of God's Word in their hearts, according to the capacity of each.² Oswald worked with him zealously, as Sigebert had done with Felix among the East-Anglians, and turned to account the knowledge of the Celtic tongue, which he had learnt in exile, by interpreting the missionary addresses of the bishop.

¹ Bede, 'H. E.,' iii. 3.

² 'Vita Oswini,' Surtees Society, 1838; Bede, 'H. E.,' iii. 5.

Like the founder of Iona, Aidan was a diligent student, devoted to reading and the study of the Scriptures, nor did he fail to exact the same diligence of all who worked with him, requiring that they must learn the Psalter, or some portion of the Scriptures, wherever they might be, as a daily duty. If, as but rarely occurred, he was invited to Oswald's table, one or two only of his clergy accompanied him, and after a slight refreshment he hurried back to his church or the room adjoining it, provided for him at Bamborough as in other places, during his tour through the province. One Easter Sunday as he feasted with the king, a silver dish, full of royal dainties, was set before them, and they were just about to stretch out their hands to bless the bread, when a thane entered, whom Oswald had set to give alms to the poor at his gate, and told him of a multitude that waited fasting without. Instantly the king bade the contents of the dish to be carried to them, and the dish itself to be broken up and divided for their benefit. Aidan seized the royal hand and blessed it, saying, "May this hand never grow old." Towards the poor, Aidan bore himself with humility, towards the rich with faithfulness, neither cringing nor flattering. Whatever gifts he received from them he expended either in works of charity or in redeeming the slaves, many of whom he trained

and educated in his schools, and ultimately advanced to the priesthood.”¹

Thus gradually the work went on under his able supervision. As the monastery at Lindisfarne increased, greater numbers of devoted men resorted thither from Iona, and carried on missionary work wherever their leader directed them to go. They in their turn planted churches in various places; founded monasteries on pieces of land granted by the king; gathered together English children for education in their schools, and developed with no little success though with rude and homely simplicity, the institutions which Paulinus had barely inaugurated.

But like Paulinus, Aidan also was destined to witness the realization of the law of missions, that success is oftentimes followed by failure, and a period of defeat follows one of conquest. Wide as was the lordship exercised by Oswald, he had one relentless foe, who would accept no terms and acknowledge no discomfiture. Penda was the rallying-point of heathendom, which, prisoned as it was to the central districts of the country, fought desperately for life.² Oswald had wrested the district of Lindsey from the Mercian king, and on the 5th of August, A.D. 642, the decisive battle was fought. The forces of the Christian king

¹ Bede, ‘H. E.,’ iii. 5.

² Green’s ‘History of the English People,’ i. 50.

and the aged but indomitable pagan met at Maserfield, which some would identify with Oswestry;¹ others with Mirfield, in the West-Riding of Yorkshire. The scene at Hatfield was in a certain sense here re-enacted. The arms of Penda were victorious, and the successor of Edwin, hemmed in by foes, fell, breathing forth his last prayer for his people, "The Lord have mercy on their souls." The conqueror cut off his head, hands, and arms, and fastened them on wooden stakes, whence they were taken in the following year, and removed to Northumbria. The hands and arms were placed in the Church of St. Peter, on the summit of the rock of Bamborough; the head was taken to Lindisfarne, where it was interred by Aidan. After the battle of Maserfield, Penda for a time stood supreme in Britain, and with him heathenism triumphed too. We can imagine how the tidings would be received in Kent; how Paulinus, safe in Rochester, and Ethelburga, in the minster at Lyminge, would think of Hatfield; how, outside the Mercian limits, priests and converts would tremble for the new-built churches. Why was such a prop of the cause removed? Did it mean that after all the work would be undone, that a heathen tempest would spread from "the Wall" to the Channel, and root out the worship of Christ wherever it had been planted?²

¹ "Oswaldestre, id est, Oswaldi arborem." ² Bright, p. 155.

Such questions might well have been asked in many a mission-station. For while Oswy, the brother and successor of Oswald, found himself unable to establish his supremacy over Deira, which preferred the rule of Oswin, son of Osric, and was fain to be content with the royalty of Bernicia, the Mercian king year by year carried his conquests still further north. On one occasion he marched upon the royal city, the impenetrable rock-fortress of Bamborough, and tried to storm it. Failing in the attempt, he pulled down the wooden huts of the villages round, piled the materials against the walls, and fired them in a fair wind, which drove the flames upon the town. Two miles off, in his hermit cell at Farne, Aidan beheld the fire and smoke rising high above the city wall, and exclaimed in horror, "See, Lord, what ill Penda is doing." And as he spoke, so ran the Northumbrian legend, the wind shifted and drove back the flames, and the pagan chief desisted from the attack. But ravaged as it was, Bernicia still fought for the Cross, while in Deira Oswin recalled to the abbot of Lindisfarne the likeness of his beloved Oswald. Beautiful in countenance, noble in person, affable, generous, and devout, he attracted many of the noblest birth to be "thanes" in his hall. His humility called forth the admiration of Aidan, and Bede tells us how once the abbot expressed his belief that one so conspicuous

for the grace of humility was not destined to live long.

The prophecy was fulfilled. Christians though they both were, jealousies could hardly fail to spring up between the princes of Deira and Bernicia. War broke out, but Oswin, ascertaining the superior strength of his adversary, broke up his army, and with one faithful thane, sought refuge in the house of one of his nobles, whom he believed to be faithful to his cause. But he was deceived. His retreat was betrayed to Oswy, who sent an officer to put him to death, with his companion. Thus died the "blameless king" on the 20th of August, A.D. 651. Stricken with remorse, Oswy, at the request of his queen, granted land to Trumhere, a Northumbrian priest, for a convent to be built on the spot of the murder, in respect for the memory of the murdered, and as an atonement for the guilt of the murderer.¹

Aidan survived his patron only twelve days. He was staying at a royal country house near Bamborough, where he had often gone forth on his missionary tours. Here he was seized with a sudden illness, and they set up a tent for him close by the wall at the west end of the church, and here he died, with his head leaning against a post which served as a buttress. On the night he expired, a youth, of

¹ Milman, ii. 243.

whom we shall speak again, while tending sheep upon the mountains, believed he saw a band of angels descend from heaven, and return with a soul of surprising brightness, and he deemed this a call to a religious life.¹ A few years after, Penda came a second time, and set on fire both village and church. But neither this fire nor one which happened soon after were sufficient to consume the post on which the head of Aidan had rested. Wherefore it was placed inside the church as a holy thing, "a tale at which, it has been remarked, we may look in two different humours. We may pass it by with a sneer, and an hypothesis, which will probably be true, that the post was of old heart-of-oak, which is burnt with extreme difficulty; or we may pause a moment in reverence before the noble figure of the good old man, ending a life of unselfish toil without a roof beneath which to lay his head; penniless and comfortless in this world; but sure of his reward in the world to come."²

It is somewhat strange that we nowhere find Aidan mentioned in connection with the Roman deacon James, whom Paulinus had left behind at York. Each seems to have gone on his own way. The deacon kept up the true and Catholic Easter in the old Roman city, Aidan kept his Celtic Easter at

¹ See below, p. 98.

² Kingsley's 'Hermits,' p. 291.

Lindisfarne. But men tolerated with patience the celebration of a double Easter in the same diocese, so long as Aidan lived. The devotion of his life and the sincerity of his works of piety and love atoned for the clashing of fast and festival, and bishops like Honorius of Canterbury and Felix of East Anglia could not help revering him, though, in the words of Bede, he kept Easter "according to the custom of his country." ¹

Bede, 'II. E.,' iii. 25.

CHAPTER VI.

MISSIONS IN MERCIA.

It is plain from the two last chapters that the history of the Church in Northumbria was, to a great extent, during the greater part of the seventh century the backbone of the history of the Church of England. The first thoughts of Gregory had been attracted towards the home of the fair-haired boys of Deira, whom he had seen in the Roman slave-market, and now the country, which at first had appeared inaccessible, concentrates towards itself the chief interest of the national conversion, while the Kentish Mission for a time retires into the background.

But the effect of the activity of Aidan was speedily felt in other quarters besides Northumbria. In the year A.D. 634, there arrived at the Court of Cynegils, king of Wessex, a missionary bishop, consecrated at Genoa by Asterius, archbishop of Milan. This was Birinus, who is said, but on uncertain evidence, to have been a Roman. He had heard of the English mission-field, and had promised to Pope Honorius that if sent he would preach the Faith in the furthest

inland territories, where no teacher had as yet set his foot. Consecrated accordingly, by the Pope's instructions, in the great cathedral city of St. Ambrose, he came over to England, and landing in Hampshire, found the Saxon kingdom of Wessex sunk so deeply in heathenism, that he determined to make it the scene of his operations, rather than advance further in quest of other fields.¹ Before long his preaching found acceptance with Cynegils, and he had consented to be baptized, when Oswald of Northumbria arrived to ask the hand of his daughter in marriage. Accordingly, in A.D. 635, Oswald became at once his godfather at the font and his son-in-law by marriage.

The baptism took place at Dorchester,² in Oxfordshire, at the confluence of the Thame and the Isis, which was now fixed upon by both the kings as the seat of the first bishop of the West Saxons. Here Birinus found ample scope for his energies, and went about on many missionary tours,³ from Dorset east-

¹ Bede, 'H. E.,' iii. 7.

² The Saxon Dorcic, retaining traces of the Roman "Dorocina."

³ "We cannot recover a single feature in those missionary journeys of Birinus; but it is reasonable to think that although Oxford as yet was not, he would come up the valley to the junction of the two rivers, find there some few ceorls ready to hear the Name of Christ, and perhaps deposit 'seeds' which, a century later, produced in St. Frideswide's humble foundation 'the nucleus' of the priory and the cathedral, and in another sense of the city and the university."—Bright, p. 149.

ward through Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire, preaching the Word, catechizing, and baptizing many proselytes. He does not seem to have opened any communication with the see of Canterbury or the Churches of Kent, where Erconbert, the successor of Eadbald, was the first English king to use his royal power for the utter destruction of idolatry.¹ He preferred to act independently, and to avail himself of every opening for the propagation of the faith. But for a time a cloud overshadowed the Wessex Mission. On the death of Cynegils in A.D. 643, the crown passed to his second son, Cenwalch, who definitely declined to follow in the steps of his father, and was unwise enough to divorce his wife, the sister of Penda, and to take another wife in her stead. This quickly brought upon him an invasion of the Mercian chief, who, two years afterwards, marched into Wessex and forced Cenwalch to seek shelter in East Anglia. There the influence of the Christian household of Anna, the king of the East Anglians, so wrought upon him, that he consented to receive baptism from Bishop Felix,² and Birinus saw him not only restored to the throne of Wessex in A.D. 648, but upholding

¹ Bede, 'H. E.,' iii. 8.

² "It is interesting to find the memory of the Apostle of East Anglia preserved in the name not only of Felixstow, to the south-east of Ipswich, but in that of a Yorkshire village, far away in the north, Feliskirk, near Thirsk."—Bright, p. 158.

the Faith which he had before disowned, and building a church for a bishopric in Winchester.

Before leaving the court of Anna, Cenwalch had seen proof that the first stage in the English mission-work had been reached, and even passed. In the year A.D. 647 his deacon, Thomas, a native of the "Fen" district, was consecrated by Honorius to fill the place of Felix, and he was not the first of native English bishops. Three years before, A.D. 644, the same archbishop had consecrated Ithamar, a man of Kent, to succeed Paulinus;¹ and though the end was far off yet, this growth of a native episcopate told of what was coming, and heralded the gradual development of a national English Church.

The necessity of appointing Teutons to be the apostles and bishops of Teutons was very generally felt.

In A.D. 650 Cenwalch nominated Agilbert, a bishop of Gallic extraction, who had spent some time in Ireland for the purpose of studying the Scriptures, to succeed Birinus in the see of Dorchester. In this position he continued for several years, but being unable to learn English, he so wearied Cenwalch, that he secretly introduced another bishop, Wini, who spoke English, to whom he gave half of Agilbert's

¹ Churches are dedicated to his memory at Crayford and Paul's Cray, in Kent.

diocese, placing his see at Winchester. This grievously offended Agilbert, and leaving Wessex, he went to Northumbria, whence he retired to France.

But in the meantime an unexpected opportunity had presented itself of establishing a successful mission in the country of the Middle Angles, between the Trent and the Bedfordshire Ouse. Here Penda had placed his son Peada as alderman, and had allowed him, during an interval of peace, to visit Oswy of Northumbria. There Peada requested the hand of his daughter Alchflæd in marriage, and accepted the condition attached, that he shall accept baptism together with his people. Accordingly he was baptized by Finan, the successor of Aidan in the see of Lindisfarne, and returned home with four priests to evangelize his Middle-Anglian subjects. Of these, three, Cedd, Adda,¹ and Betti, were Northumbrians. The fourth, Diuma, was an Irishman. Thus began the first mission to the Middle Angles in A.D. 653, and it was blessed with signal success. Well qualified for their work by learning and by character, the four priests found willing hearers, and induced many, both high and low, to renounce the worship of Thor and Woden, and receive baptism.² Nay, they even ventured into Mercia, and did not

¹ Brother of Adda, abbot of Gateshead, close to Newcastle.

² Bede; 'H. E.,' iii. 21.

experience any opposition from Penda. The pagan chief, softened probably by age, did not oppose their work. He affirmed that he had no objection to their preaching; he only despised, he said, and hated those whose practice did not agree with their profession, who had "put their faith in this new God, and then did not trouble themselves to obey His commands."

About the same time an opportunity was presented of sending a second mission into the country of the East Saxons. Sigebert, the new king, was a friend of the King of Northumbria, and paid frequent visits to his kingdom. During these visits, the subject of the new and the old faith was often discussed between them, and Sigebert was so moved by the arguments of Oswy concerning the nature of God, His judgment of the world, and the future happiness of those who serve Him,¹ that he consented to be baptized, together with his friends who had accompanied him to the north. The baptism was performed by Finan at the royal "vill," near Walton, or Walbottle, and now, like Peada, Sigebert asked for Christian teachers to convert and baptize his people. At the earnest request of Oswy, Cedd consented to visit Essex with one assistant, and his work prospered greatly. In A.D. 654, Cedd visited Lindisfarne, and recounted to Bishop

¹ See the summary of them in Bede, iii. 22.

Finan the result of his labours, whereupon Finan resolved, before sending him back, to consecrate him bishop of the province, and calling his two other bishops to assist in the ordination, consecrated him to superintend the East-Saxon Church. Cedd returned, and was indefatigable in his labours. He built churches and ordained priests and deacons to aid him in preaching and baptizing, and thus a great impulse was given to the spread of Christianity. At Tilbury, to be famous afterwards in connection with the Spanish Armada, and at Bradwell-on-the-Sea, at the mouth of the Pent,¹ he established not only a body of clergy, but a monastic house, where many of the brethren maintained the strict rule of Lindisfarne and Iona. Meanwhile he did not cease to keep up his connexion with Northumbria, and on one occasion was solicited by Ethelwald, king of Deira, to accept a site for a monastery, in which he might himself worship and eventually be buried. Cedd chose a spot, lonely and desolate, "fit for the haunts of robbers and wild beasts," to use the words of Bede, "rather than to be dwellings for men," at Lastingham, near Whitby, on the North Yorkshire moors, and consecrated the site with prayers and fasts according to the Celtic ritual.

The year of Cedd's consecration was marked by an event which had no little influence on the for-

¹ The Fostwell or Blackwater. Bede, 'H. E.,' iii. 22.

tunes of the Northumbrian Church. Though Penda's son had married the daughter of Oswy, he still continued his inroads into the territory of Northumbria, and though Oswy had given him another of his sons as a hostage in his hands, and promised him innumerable royal ornaments and other presents, he found it useless to try to induce the old chief to withdraw his devastating bands. The pagan king summoned his allies, thirty chiefs of princely rank, and marched against him, determined to annihilate Northumbria as a kingdom. Oswy on his side prepared for the encounter, and bade his small force, made smaller by desertion, put their trust in Christ. "If the pagan king," said he, "refuses to accept our gifts, let us offer them to Him who will, even the Lord our God," and he vowed that, if victorious, he would devote his daughter Elfred, then a babe of a year old, to the cloister life, and give twelve pieces of land for building monasteries. Putting their faith in Christ as their leader,¹ he and his men awaited the attack near the river Winwoed, by some identified with the Broad Aire, which flows by Leeds, by others with the Wynt. It was the 15th of November when the armies met, and in its result the battle resembled that between Sisera and Barak, at the Kishon, centuries before. As then, so now, the smaller force triumphed

¹ Bede, 'H. E.,' ii. 24.

over numbers apparently invincible. Penda himself was slain, the Winwoed rose in its bed, and, swollen by autumnal rains, swept away multitudes of the fugitives, so that "many more died in their flight than the sword devoured while fighting." It was a great day in England. The cause of the older gods was lost for ever. "The strife between the creeds of Christ and of Woden was now finally decided; the Mercians embraced the religion of their neighbours, and Northumberland again became the leading power in Britain."

Oswy, without delay, proceeded to fulfil his vow. His daughter was devoted to a virgin life, and of the twelve pieces of land, six were given in Deira and six in Bernicia. While retaining in his own hands the government of Mercia proper, he placed the South Mercians, or the Middle Angles, under the rule of Peada. The "Scot" Diuma, one of the missionaries who had accompanied Peada from the court of Oswy, was consecrated by Finan the first bishop of the Middle Angles, and soon afterwards both Oswy and Peada commenced a monastery at Medeshamstede, "the dwelling-place by the meadows," dedicated to the glory of Christ and of St. Peter, where now is the city of Peterborough.

But Peada lived to do little more than plan

¹ Freeman, i. 36.

the foundation of the new monastery. Before a year had passed, he was mysteriously assassinated, and thus afforded another proof, in addition to those already given, that neither the adoption of the Christian faith nor the spectacle of a blameless life was a security against treachery and a violent death. But the assassination of Peada did not materially hinder the development of the South Mercian mission. Diuma continued to labour with success, and had his seat at Repton. There shortly afterwards he died, and was succeeded by Ceollach, another "Scot," who was also consecrated by Finan. His episcopate was very short. The Mercian chiefs revolted against Oswy as their over-lord, and set up Wulfhere, a son of Penda, who ruled vigorously for seventeen years, and wrested Lindsey from Northumbria. Annoyed at the separation of Mercia from the Northern province, Ceollach laid aside his episcopal office, and retired to Hy, and thence to Ireland. He was succeeded, A.D. 662, by Trumhere, an Angle, who had been instructed and ordained, like his predecessor, by the Irish-Scots.

With Trumhere at Lichfield, Ithamar at Rochester, Thomas at Durwich, Cedd in Essex, began the native episcopate, which was soon to root itself throughout England, and take the place of the Roman succession, which died out with Birinus the

apostle of Wessex. As yet, however, there was one considerable obstacle to complete union between the different dioceses. Two bands of devoted men had hitherto been employed in the conversion of England, the Roman, assisted by their converts and some teachers from France, and the Irish, who were plainly the larger body. Between the two there were the old differences as to the time of keeping Easter and the form of the clerical tonsure. They affected, it is true, externals only, but amongst a people just weaned from idolatry they had a disintegrating influence, and produced much misunderstanding. Thus, while Oswy was celebrating Easter according to the custom he had learnt at Iona, his queen Earfleda observed it according to the rule which she had learnt in Kent, and was still practising the austerities of Lent. These differences were tolerated during the episcopate of Aidan and Finan, but when Finan died and was succeeded by Colman, the controversy reached such a height, that it was arranged that an amicable conference should be held at Whitby, where the abbess Hilda presided over a famous double monastery for monks and nuns. On the side of the Irish-Scots appeared Colman of Lindisfarne, Bishop Cedd, then on a visit to Lastingham, and the abbess Hilda herself, while Oswy naturally inclined to the same views. On the other side were James, the deacon of

Paulinus, Agilbert, whom we have seen occupying the see of Dorchester, and his priest Agatho; Romanus, a Kentish priest belonging to the queen's household; and though last not least, one who had already acquired a great influence over the king's son, the famous Wilfrid.

Wilfrid was the son of a Northumbrian thane, and was born seven years after the baptism of so many Northumbrians in the Glen and the Swale. In his thirteenth year he resolved to embrace the monastic life, and having been sent to the court of Oswy, was transferred to Lindisfarne. There he distinguished himself by his diligence and devotion, "acquired all he could learn of the Scotie discipline, learned by heart the Psalter in Jerome's more correct or 'Gallican version,' and was loved by the other boys as a brother, by the seniors, and doubtless by Aidan, as a son."¹

About the year A.D. 650 he conceived a strong desire to visit Rome, and found an eager promoter of his wishes in the queen Earfleda, who sent him to her brother the King of Kent. During a year's stay he became acquainted with the Church usages of Canterbury, and thence, in company with another eminent Northumbrian, Benedict Biscop, or Biscop Baducing of the royal house of the Lindisfari, he embarked

¹ Bede, v. 19; Bright, p. 188.

for the continent. Arrived at Lyons, he so won the favour of Aunemund, the rich and powerful prelate of the see, that he might have married his niece, the daughter of Dalfinus, Count of Lyons, and occupied a high position in France. But nothing would turn him from accomplishing his pilgrimage to Rome, and on arriving there he was introduced to the archdeacon Boniface, one of the council of the Pope, who instructed him in the four Gospels, the Roman computation of Easter, and other points of ecclesiastical discipline. His stay lasted over some months, and before he left he was presented to the newly-elected pope, Eugenius I., who gave him his blessing.

Returning from Rome, he stayed three years at Lyons, and received the Roman tonsure from the archbishop. Thence he made his way to England, and became the intimate friend of Alchfrid, the son of Oswy. The young prince regarded with wondering respect a countryman of his own who had seen so many lands, had received the blessing of the pope, and was the bearer of certain holy relics, and appointed him abbot of the new monastery of Ripon. Shortly afterwards Wilfrid was admitted into the priesthood by Agilbert, the bishop of Wessex, who was at that time visiting Northumbria.

The presence of such a man at the conference at Whitby could not but be of great importance. It

began with an exhortation from Oswy to peace, and a concord and a determination to discover and follow the true tradition as to the Paschal question. Colman first delivered his opinion, and urged the uninterrupted descent of their tradition from St. John, and the authority of the saintly Columba, the founder of Hy. Colman's words were interpreted into English by Bishop Cedd, and then Agilbert was asked to state his views. He requested that Wilfrid, as being well acquainted with the English tongue,¹ might be allowed to deliver their common sentiments. The young abbot related how he had seen the Easter festival celebrated at Rome, where the blessed apostles Peter and Paul had taught and suffered, and throughout Gaul and Italy where he had himself travelled. The same custom, he had ascertained, was observed throughout Africa, Asia, Egypt, Greece, indeed the whole world, save "the obscure corner where dwelt the Picts and Scots."

The controversy now became warm, and was carried on on both sides with skill and acuteness. How it would have ended it is impossible to say, had not Wilfrid closed his address with the pointed question, How any could set the authority of Columba in opposition to that of St. Peter, to whom had been given the keys of heaven?

¹ Bede, 'H. E.,' iii. 25.

These words roused the attention of Oswy, and turning to Colman, he inquired, "Do you acknowledge that St. Peter has the keys of heaven?" "Undoubtedly," was the reply. "And can you bring forward any such high authority for your Columba?" continued the king. The bishop could but answer "No." "Then, for my part," said Oswy, "I will hold to St. Peter, lest, when I present myself at the gates of heaven, he should close them against me." The humorous tone of the king's decision did but veil its importance. Whatever may have been the motives of those present, superstitious fear, or a wish to side with the king, those present concurred with him, and after some further debate on the question of the tonsure, the council closed. Cedd, who had listened attentively to the arguments on both sides, returned to his diocese, and abandoned the see of Lindisfarne. Colman, with all his Irish brethren, and thirty Northumbrians who had joined the monastery, quitted Lindisfarne and sailed to Iona, and thence to the island of Inisbofin off the west coast of Mayo,¹ where he died A.D. 676.

¹ Bede, 'H. E.,' iv. 4. In Latin, "*Insula vaccæ albæ*," the "island of the white cow."

CHAPTER VII.

THE MISSION-WORK OF ST. CHAD.

THE departure of Colman from Northumbria marks an important epoch in the conversion of England. Had the disciples of Columba won the day at Whitby, the whole ecclesiastical history of the country would have been changed. Little as Oswy may have been able to discern the momentous consequences of his decision, it has been remarked that it was "the true instinct of a statesman"¹ that led him to set aside the love and gratitude of his youth, and to link England to the great Latin Church of the West.

At the same time we ought not, in common fairness, to detract from the great debt of gratitude we owe to those Celtic pioneers, whose unceasing labours had so large a share in the conversion of our land. At any rate, their work lived after them, and two Northumbrians, trained by them, may be taken as types of many whose names have perished, but whose zeal reflected the best features of the Celtic school.

The first of these was one of four brothers, of whom Bishop Cedd, whom we have just seen present at

¹ Green's 'History of the English People,' i. 57.

Whitby, was one. This was Ceadda, or, as he is better known, St. Chad. In early life he had studied in one of the Irish monastic schools, and at a later period had entered the monastery of Lindisfarne under Bishop Aidan. In A.D. 664 there swept over England a terrible pestilence, known as the "Yellow Plague," from the ghastly yellow hue of the bodies of its victims. Coming suddenly and unexpectedly, it struck down high and low in a common death, and amongst others the King of Kent; Deusdedit, the archbishop of Canterbury; Damian, bishop of Rochester; Tuda, the successor of Colman at Lindisfarne, and Cedd, bishop of Essex.

Cedd was staying at the time at Lastingham, when he was carried off with so many others in Northumbria; and it is a proof of the affection with which he was regarded, that on hearing of his death, thirty brethren of a monastery which he had founded amongst the East Angles came to Lastingham, intending to live or die beside his grave. They were heartily welcomed by the brethren there, but all, save one, a lad, were swept away by the pestilence. Before he died, the bishop appointed his brother Ceadda to succeed him as abbot, and his many gifts and virtues justified the choice. The death of Tuda had created a vacancy at Lindisfarne. Who was to succeed him? The party which had

been victorious at the Conference would naturally favour the appointment of Wilfrid, and he as naturally would desire that the seat of the bishopric should be at York. This was agreed to, and he crossed over to Gaul, and was consecrated at Compiègne in Neustria, probably at the beginning of A.D. 665. The consecration was celebrated with unusual magnificence. Twelve prelates officiated on the occasion, and of these Agilbert, who had returned to his native country, was one. The new bishop lingered in Gaul till the spring of A.D. 666, and in the meantime the Celtic party had rallied, and represented to Oswy that the abbot of Lastingham was eminently qualified to fill Aidan's seat. So he was elected, and at the bidding of the king went south into Kent to be ordained bishop of the Church at York,¹ with Eadhed, the king's chaplain, who afterwards became Bishop of Lindsey, and eventually of Ripon.

On their arrival in Kent they found the archiepiscopal chair, vacant by the death of Deusdedit, still unoccupied. Instead, however, of seeing in this an insuperable difficulty, the two turned their steps towards Wessex; and Ceadda sought consecration from Wini, bishop of Winchester. Wini consented, and careful to observe the requirement of these con-

¹ Bede, 'H. E.,' iii. 28.

secrations, obtained the co-operation of two bishops of British race,¹ probably from Cornwall,² who laid their hands upon the new Northumbrian bishop.

This consecration illustrates the position of the see of Canterbury in the Church of England at this time, and shows that it had not as yet come to occupy the unquestioned position of "mother and mistress of English sees," a position which neither the mission of Gregory nor the seat of Augustine had been sufficient of themselves to obtain for it. The co-operation of these British prelates, maintainers of the Celtic Easter, would naturally give a handle to those who opposed the appointment of Ceadda, and questioned the regularity of his consecration. "In other respects, however," as has been well said, "the combination of agents in the scene then witnessed by the Church people of Winchester, was specially interesting and appropriate. A prelate consecrated in Gaul joins himself with two prelates of a different rite, representing the old Church of Alban and Restitutus, of Dubricius and David, in the consecration of one who had sat as a boy at Aidan's feet, and had but very lately, it would seem, given up the British and Scotie observances."³

¹ Bede, 'H. E.,' iii. 28.

² Haddan and Stubbs, i. 124.

³ Bright, p. 213.

Installed as Bishop of York, Ceadda began at once to devote himself to the work which had now devolved upon him. He travelled on foot, "preaching the Gospel in towns, in the open country, in cottages, and villages,"¹ and endeavoured to instruct the people according to the example of Aidan and his brother Cedd. On Wilfrid's return from his long absence he found his see occupied, and peaceably retired to his monastery at Ripon. Thence he was summoned by Wulfhere, king of Mercia, to extend the faith in his kingdom, and received from him several grants of land for the foundation of monasteries. Egbert also, the King of Kent, sent for him and intrusted him with the care of the diocese till a successor should be elected.

It might have been supposed that he himself would have been deemed the most fitted for the post ; but after consultation between Oswy "the Bretwalda" and Egbert, it was agreed to nominate Wighard, the first ever chosen from the secular clergy, and to send him to Rome, there to be consecrated. "in order that he might be able to ordain Catholic prelates for the Churches of the English throughout all Britain."²

Wighard set out in A.D. 667 with letters from the

¹ Bede, 'H. E.,' iii. 28.

² Ibid., iii. 29.

king, and gold and silver vessels, and on his arrival was admitted to an interview with Pope Vitalian. But shortly afterwards he and nearly all his companions were cut off by a pestilence, due probably to the malaria which has so often proved fatal to visitors at Rome.

Hereupon, Vitalian wrote a letter to Oswy, thanking him for the gifts he had sent, and expressing his great sorrow for the removal of Wighard from "the light of this world," and informing him that he had not as yet been able to find a man fit for the vacant archbishopric. The distance of Canterbury from Rome, he said, had deterred many from accepting the office; but he would do his utmost to find a suitable person, and would send him with due instructions as to the right government of the Church in Britain, and in the mean time he exhorted the king to labour for the spread of Christianity throughout the island over which he ruled.

The pope took no ordinary pains to make a suitable selection.

His choice first fell on a learned abbot named Hadrian, a native of Africa, "conversant with Scripture and all ecclesiastical rules," as also with the Greek and Latin languages. But Hadrian excused himself as unworthy of so high a charge, and suggested that Andrew, a monk from a neighbouring

nunnery, where he appears to have acted as chaplain, should be appointed to the post. But Andrew, though deemed by all worthy of the office, was of such weak health as to be obliged to decline it.

Therefore Vitalian again pressed Hadrian to accept it; but he proposed a monk named Theodore, a native of Tarsus in Cilicia, well trained alike in Greek and Latin literature, and familiar with sacred and secular learning, who was then living at Rome, and was upwards of sixty-six years old. The pope consented to send him to Britain, but imposed one condition, that Hadrian should accompany him, partly because he had on two occasions already visited Gaul, and knew the journey, and partly that he might keep a watch over Theodore, and "prevent him from introducing anything contrary to the faith, after the manner of the Greeks, into the Church over which he was to preside."¹

Accordingly, Theodore was first ordained sub-deacon, and afterwards consecrated bishop, and started for Britain, in company with Hadrian and Benedict Biscop, Wilfrid's friend, in A.D. 668. They went by sea to Marseilles, then by land to Arles, and so to Paris, where Agilbert,² now settled

¹ Bede, 'H. E.,' iv. 1. The allusion is to the Monothelite controversy.

² See above, p. 82.

there as bishop, entertained him for some time, and doubtless gave him much information respecting the country whither he was bound.

During the winter Theodore stayed in France, and in the mean time King Egbert, being informed that the new archbishop was in the kingdom of the Franks, sent his reeve Redfrid to bring him home ; and at length, on the second Sunday after Pentecost, May 27th, A.D. 669, from the native place of the great apostle St. Paul, the new primate arrived at Canterbury.¹

Seventy-two years had now passed since the landing of Augustine. The seventh in the line of succession of archbishops had now arrived, and, though advanced in years, proceeded at once to carry out his plans for the organization of "the yet wild and divided island," to which he had been sent. He began by holding a general visitation of England, and on reaching Northumbria, objected to the irregularity of Ceadda's consecration. With characteristic humility

¹ Hadrian was kept in France for some time longer, and did not reach England till A.D. 670. The sovereigns of France and their chief ministers claimed the right to arrest any travellers with whose reasons for passing through their country they were not satisfied. Elroin, mayor of the palace of Neustria and Burgundy, detained Hadrian, suspecting that he was an envoy from the emperor, Constantine IV., to "the kings of Britain," hostile to the dynasty of Clotaire III.

Ceadda resigned his see, and returned without a murmur to his monastery at Lastingham. Wilfrid was now seated at York. But the services of Ceadda were not to be lost to the Church. By the death of Jaruman the bishopric of Mercia became vacant. Wulfhere the king requested Theodore to nominate a successor, and he prevailed on Ceadda to leave the privacy of Lastingham, and to undertake the bishopric of Mercia, with the charge of the Middle-English and the Lindiswaras, or inhabitants of Lindsey. The seat of his large diocese was at Lichfield,¹ and here he either founded or built a church, dedicated it to St. Mary, to the east of the present cathedral, and erected a home for himself at "Chadstowe," where he resided when not engaged in the ministry of the Church.² As might have been expected, he proved himself an earnest, exemplary bishop. He journeyed on foot after his old fashion, from place to place, and lost no opportunity of preaching the Word. At the urgent bidding of Theodore, who had conceived a great affection for him, he sometimes, but rarely, made use of a horse, and preferred rather to carry out his simpler plan of making his way from village to village. When at

¹ Lyccid felth = "the field of the dead," as being probably a battle-field. Compare *Lich-gate*, the gate of *the dead*.

² Bede, 'H. E.,' iv. 3.

home at Lichfield he devoted himself to the study of the Scriptures and prayer in the company of seven or eight friends, the witnesses of his energetic labours, and his helpers in every good work.

From the picture, which Bede has given us, we can form a conception of the earnest piety which distinguished him. In common with many of the early Teutonic Christians, St. Chad was wont to concentrate his thoughts on the dark and mysterious side of his religious faith. As his Teutonic forefathers had regarded entire nature as an organ or instrument of Deity,¹ and heard voices from another world in the thunder and the storm, so he interpreted all atmospheric disturbances as a call to self-examination and preparation for the end. If a high wind swept over the solitary moors of Lavingham, or roared round his church at Lichfield, he at once laid aside his studies, and besought the Divine pity for mankind.² If the gale grew yet more violent, or the thunder rolled in the heavens, he would repair to the church and devote himself to earnest prayer and the recitation of the Psalms till the weather became calm. When men asked him why he did so, he would say, "Have ye not read how the Lord thundered out of heaven, and the Highest gave His thunder?"³ For it

¹ See chap. ii. p. 8.

² Bede, 'H. E.,' iv. 3.

³ Psalm xviii. 15.

is the Lord that moveth the air, and raiseth the wind, darteth the lightning, and sendeth forth His voice to move the inhabitants of the earth to fear Him, to put them in mind of the day when the heavens and the earth shall be wrapped in flames, and He shall come in clouds with power and majesty to judge both the quick and dead."

To himself, at any rate, the thought of his decease, which the oft-recurring pestilence made too probable, brought with it no gloom. Like St. Francis of Assisi, he praised his Lord "for our sister the death of the body, from which no man escapeth;" and when the time came for his departure, he was not afraid. One day, as Bede tells the tale, his favourite attendant, Ouini, was at out-door work in the field, and the rest of the brethren had gone to the church, when suddenly he thought he heard a voice of joy and singing floating downwards from heaven, and filling the oratory where St. Chad was, and thence, after the space of half an hour, it was wafted upwards again to heaven. Marvelling with himself what the sound could mean, he beheld his master open the window and clap his hands, as he was wont to do, when he would call to him any who were outside. Ouini went near, and was bidden to call the seven brethren, and when they came the bishop exhorted them to love and good-will, and the observance

of their monastic rule. "For," said he, "the day of my departure draweth near. That Loving Guest, who was wont to visit our brethren, hath deigned to come to me to-day, and to summon me from this world. Go ye, therefore, to the church and bid the brethren commend my departure by prayer to the Lord, and prepare also for their own death, the hour of which no man knoweth, by watching, and supplication, and good works." Then they went their way, and he who had heard the heavenly song drew near to the bishop, and besought him that he would tell him what those sounds meant that he had heard. Thereupon the bishop bade him hold his peace, and said that it was the voices of angels, who had come to call him to his heavenly reward, and had told him that yet seven days and they would bear him thither with them. All which came to pass, for he was speedily stricken down by a languishing distemper, and closed his episcopate on Tuesday, the 2nd of March, A.D. 672,¹ and was buried at Lichfield, near St. Mary's Church, by the water-side, whence his remains were removed to the cathedral that succeeded it.

¹ For the announcement of the moment of his departure to Ecgbert, far away in Ireland, see Bede, 'H. E.,' iv. 13.

CHAPTER VIII.

ST. CUTHBERT, THE APOSTLE OF THE LOWLANDS.

FROM this eminent labourer in the Mercian mission-field we will turn to another, the story of whose life lights up the period at which we have arrived, when the "old order was changing and giving place to new," and the day-star of the Christian faith was rising in England "with healing in its wings."

We have seen that the greatest name in the Cum-brian Church was that of Kentigern,¹ but the name which has left its deepest mark in the Lowlands was that of the great northern saint and bishop Cudberct, or as he is popularly known, St. Cuthbert. In respect to his biography he is more fortunate even than Columba, for Bede, the author of the best of the lives of Cuthbert, was born in the lifetime of the saint, and must have been about thirteen years old when he died. Moreover he tells us that he had frequently shown his manuscript written within forty years of Cuthbert's death, to "Herefrid the priest, as well as to several other persons who, from having long dwelt with the man of God, were thoroughly

¹ See 'Conversion of the Celts,' p. 136.

acquainted with his life, that they might read it and deliberately correct or expunge what they thought advisable.”¹

Of the birth and parentage of Cuthbert, Bede tells us nothing. An Irish life written towards the close of the twelfth century represents him to have been the son of an Irish knight by an Anglian mother, and states that she came to Britain with the boy.² The more probable account is that he was born about the year A.D. 639, in that district of ancient Northumbria which lies beyond the Tweed, on the southern side of the Lammermoor hills.

He seems to have been of humble parentage, and from his eighth year lived in the little village of Wrangholm, in the house of a widow named Kenspid, whom he used to call his mother. As a boy he was conspicuous for bodily vigour, and was famous for his high spirits and his skill in leaping, running, and wrestling. Before long he came to be a shepherd, and tended his flocks in the hill country on the banks of the Leader. But already in youth his robust frame had also a poetic sensibility, and his mind leaned towards solemn and serious thoughts. He saw visions and dreamed dreams. One night, as he was shepherding his sheep, he saw, he thought, a light streaming

¹ Bede, ‘*Vita S. Cuthberti*,’ Præf.

² Skene’s ‘*Celtic Scotland*,’ ii. 204–206.

down from heaven, and choirs of angels descending to the earth, and lo ! they were bearing away a soul of exceeding brightness to the heavenly country. He awoke his companions, and told them what he had seen, and shortly afterwards he learnt that that very night Aidan,¹ the good bishop of Lindisfarne, had passed away, and all his previous longings settled into a resolute will to join the monastic life, and attain to the fellowship hereafter of beings so glorious as those he had seen in vision.

So he descended the hills towards the monastery of old Melrose, distant somewhat more than a day's journey, "on a green, sheltered slope, a little below the point where the Tweed receives the scanty waters of the Leader, and then takes a bold semicircular sweep near the woods and rocks of Bemerside." Melrose was an offshoot from Lindisfarne, and was then but a mission-station, consisting of a group of straw-thatched log-huts in the midst of untilled solitudes. Eata, the abbot, one, with Ceadda and Cedd, of the twelve boys whom Aidan had received in the early days of his mission work from English parents to be trained for God, was absent. Boisil, the provost, welcomed him to the monastery with the words, "Behold a servant of the Lord," and the new comer was soon conspicuous for his devotion and energy. This was in A.D. 651.

* See above, p. 68.

After a few years' sojourn, Cuthbert accompanied Eata to colonize the new monastic house at Ripon, and was appointed to act as hospitaller. Thence, refusing to lay aside their Celtic usages in respect to Easter, the brotherhood returned to Melrose. "To-day the land is a land of poetry and romance. Cheviot and Lammermoor, Ettrick and Teviotdale, Yarrow and Annan-water, are musical with old ballads and border minstrelsy. Agriculture has chosen its valleys for her favourite seat, and drainage and steam-power have turned sedgy marshes into farm and meadow. But to see the lowlands as they were in Cuthbert's day we must sweep away meadow and farm again, and replace them by vast solitudes, dotted here and there with clusters of wooden hovels, and covered by boggy tracks, over which travellers rode spear in hand and eye kept cautiously about them."¹

But at this time the little brotherhood had worse evils to contend against than the dreary solitude of their home. A precursor of the pestilence, which we have already seen ravaging Kent and Essex, visited the valley of the Tweed also, and carried off Boisil. Cuthbert was attacked, but recovered, and succeeded to the office of provost. He found need for all the energy he could put forth. Decimated by the yellow pest, the people

¹ Green's 'English People,' i. 53.

sought relief by falling back on heathen amulets and charms,¹ and Cuthbert saw that if he was to produce any results, he must add the work of an evangelist to his other duties. In the hope of winning over his flock from heathen errors, and sustaining them in the faith, he would go forth sometimes on foot, sometimes on horseback, and be absent from his monastery for weeks together, penetrating into the wildest valleys of Ettrick and the Lammermoor, and preaching in villages which, seated high up among craggy, uncouth mountains, were frightful to others even to look at, and whose poverty and barbarity rendered them inaccessible to other teachers.² "So great," says his biographer, "was his skill in teaching, so vast was his power of loving persuasion, such a brightness shone forth from his angelic countenance, that no one in his presence dared to conceal from him the hidden secrets of his soul." Unlike his Irish comrades, he needed no interpreter as he passed from village to village; the frugal, long-headed Northumbrians listened willingly to one who was himself a peasant of the Lowlands, and "who had caught the rough Northumbrian burr along the banks of the Leader."³

¹ Bede, 'H. E.,' iv. 27; 'Vit. Cuth.,' c. ix.

² Bede, 'Vita S. Cuthberti,' c. ix.; 'H. E.,' iv. 27.

³ Green, 'English People,' i. 54.

It was about this time that he paid a visit to Coldingham, and spent the greater part of the night in prayer and lengthened vigils. Thence he proceeded to visit the Picts of Galloway, who were at this time under the dominion of the Angles. He embarked thither on board a vessel with two of the brethren, and arrived there the day after Christmas, expecting to be able to return speedily, as the sea was smooth and the wind favourable. But no sooner had they landed than a storm arose, which detained them there for several days exposed to cold and hunger. But on the fourth day the tempest ceased, and a favourable breeze brought them back to their own country. The traces of this visit remain to the present day in the name of Kirkcudbright.

Thus laboured the peasant-preacher for many years, till his old abbot Eata removed him, in A.D. 664, from Melrose to Lindisfarne, and made him prior of the community. At this time the victory which Wilfrid had won at Whitby had begun to bear fruit, and Eata having conformed to the Catholic views, it became the duty of the prior to induce his brethren to lay aside the traditions of their fathers and adopt the new ways. It was a task full of trouble and difficulty. An ordinary man would have given it up in despair. But nothing could resist the force of Cuthbert's example and the patient pleading of his words.

He would not dispute ; he would not quarrel ; but he would be obeyed ; and thus in time he prevailed.

The example which he set told with a force that could not be resisted. His life was lightning, and therefore he could make his words thunder. Sometimes, we are told, he would spend three or four nights together in vigil and prayer, without ever lying down. He was ever to be found in some retired place, either making something with his hands or reciting the Psalms, or going about the island to see that all was well. If at any time any of the brethren complained that they had been disturbed in their nightly or noontide slumbers, he would pleasantly reply, " It causes *me* no annoyance when I am roused to do or meditate on something useful." At the celebration of the Holy Eucharist it was rather, Bede tells us, his heart than his voice that was uplifted at the *Sursum Corda*, nor could he ever finish the holy service without tears. As an administrator of discipline he was wont to blend severity towards sin with infinite tenderness towards the sinner, and such tenderness he ever believed to be the best mode of dealing with honest confession of shortcoming.

As at Melrose, he found work to be done not only amongst the brethren but the country people also. Again he went forth on his missionary journeys, visiting village after village, attracting by his winning

sweetness the hearts of men, and bidding them be diligent in seeking the joys of heaven. Nothing daunted his trust in God. Once he had wandered far with a youthful companion. Night drew on and they had nothing to eat. "Where shall we lodge, and where can we find food?" asked his companion. "Learn, my son," replied the prior, "to have faith and hope always in the Lord. No one who serves God faithfully can ever perish with hunger. See you yonder eagle overhead? God can feed us through its means if He will," and lo! the bird laid a fish on the bank, which Cuthbert bade the lad fetch, and cut in two. One-half they kept and made a meal of at a village which they reached, the other half the saint bade the lad take back, that the eagle too might have its share in return for its service to them. At another time when he was with some of the brethren in an open boat, a blinding snowstorm drove them on the coast of Fife. "The road is closed by the snow along the shore," murmured his comrades; "our way over the sea is barred by the storm." "But the way to heaven is not closed," replied the prior.

At length, when twelve years had passed away, the old Celtic spirit of asceticism rose up within him, and he longed, like so many before him, for completer solitude. First, he retired to the mainland, and secluded himself in a recess near the village of

Howburn, still known as "Cuthbert's Cave." After awhile he bethought him of a wilder spot, one of the little isles of Farne,¹ where never before had man dwelt. Here, with the deep sea rolling at his feet and the gulls wailing about his head,² he built for himself, with the aid of the brethren, a wall of turf and stone, so high that he could see over it nothing but the sky. Within this enclosure he erected a circular hut of turf and rough stone, and made two rooms within, one for an oratory, the other for a dwelling-place. At the place of anchorage he erected a larger building, to shelter the brethren from Lindisfarne when they paid him a visit.³ And there for nine long years he lived alone and worshipped God, but certainly not half so truly as when at Melrose or Lindisfarne he went up and down amongst his people, and won the rude Northumbrians to the faith.

¹ The Fern or Farne islands are in number upwards of seventeen, and lie from one and a half to five miles off the coast opposite Bamborough. They are famous as the scene of the rescue of nine persons from the *Forfarshire*, on September 5th, 1838, by Grace Darling and her father, the lighthouse-keeper.—See Murray's 'Handbook for Durham and Northumberland,' pp. 216, 217.

² Kingsley's 'Hermits,' p. 293.

³ St. Cuthbert's horror of the female sex made him forbid the keeping of cows upon the island, because, as he said, "where there is a cow there must be a woman, and where there is a woman there must be mischief."

His life was now one of complete loneliness. He seldom showed himself to any visitors. The cell in which he lived had but one window, and even this after awhile he closed, and could not be prevailed to open it except to give his blessing when urgently sought.

At length his solitude was unexpectedly interrupted. In A.D. 684 Theodore, for some reason, thought it right to depose Tunbert from the bishopric of Hexham, and in a great synod assembled at Twyford, on the river Alne, at which Egfrid, king of Northumbria, and Theodore were present, it was agreed that Cuthbert should be consecrated bishop in his place. Accordingly, Egfrid himself, with Bishop Trumwine of Abercorn, and a number of monks and "great men,"¹ proceeded to Bam-borough, and crossing "the strait," landed at Farne, where they were joined by many of the brethren from Lindisfarne.

Cuthbert was now constrained to come forth, and after the utmost entreaties he yielded, and consented to accept the episcopal dignity. The actual consecration was deferred till the following spring, and Cuthbert spent the interval with his old friend Eata at Melrose, who consented to surrender to him his own see of Lindis-

¹ Bede, 'H. E.,' iv. 28.

farne in exchange for Hexham, and he was consecrated bishop of the Church where he had so long served as prior, in St. Peter's Minster at York, on Easter Day, March 26, A.D. 685. Before he left York, the king, in the presence of Theodore, bestowed upon him a grant of the land "from the wall of St. Peter's to the great gate westwards, and to the city wall southwards," together with the village of Crayke, which would be a convenient halting-place for one travelling from the north, before entering the forest of Galtres, which lay between it and York, and covered nearly one hundred thousand acres.¹

Thus Cuthbert was placed in charge of a district with which he had been long familiar. But he had not been bishop many weeks before a great national sorrow fell upon the land. Contrary to the advice of all his friends, Egfrid, resolved to win renown as a conqueror, crossed the Forth with an army, marched into Pictland, and penetrated as far as Dunnichen, near Forfar. By feigned retreats the Picts had lured him to his destruction, and he fell in battle on the 20th of May, A.D. 685. The frontier of the Forth was now abandoned, "and the kingdom of Northumbria, taking its limits at the Tweed, foreshadowed the boundary-line between

¹ Bright, p. 332.

the England and Scotland of later times.”¹ Bishop Trumwine fled from Abercorn, and the ecclesiastical establishment there was shifted for safety to Whitby, in Yorkshire.

The labours of such a bishop as Cuthbert in this crisis of perplexity and danger must have been welcomed by many in his diocese. His personal habits of devotion, untiring labour, and missionary activity were maintained with unflagging zeal. It was a saying of his, that “to advise and comfort the weak was equivalent to an act of prayer.” He himself realized this to the full. He went about as in former days, preaching the Word with the same persuasive sweetness, welcoming strangers, ransoming captives, feeding the hungry, and traversing again many a familiar moor and outlying glen.

An interesting incident, recorded by Bede, enables us to realize one of these missionary tours with unusual freshness. On one occasion he had arranged to hold a Confirmation for the people of a number of hamlets, and in default of a church the people spread tents near a woodland spot, and cut down boughs of trees to afford shelter for themselves. Here they remained for two days, and during that period Cuthbert found opportunities of endearing himself to the people of the country-side

¹ Burton, ‘Hist. Scot.,’ i. 282.

by his sympathy and solicitude for their welfare. On one occasion, the son of a woman, wasted with fever, was brought on a rude pallet to the entrance of the wood, and the bishop was asked to bestow upon him his blessing. Cuthbert bade the boy be brought near, prayed over him, and blessed him, whereupon, says his biographer,¹ the boy rose up, and, being refreshed with food, gave thanks to God, and returned to the woman who had carried him thither. During the same tour he arrived at a certain village, and when he had exhorted all whom he found there, he said to the priest, "Do you think that any one remains in these parts who may require our ministrations? Or, having visited all the sick, may we now pass on?" The priest, on looking round, saw a woman standing at some distance, who, a little before, had lost one son by a pestilence which had ravaged the neighbourhood, and now held in her arms his brother, who was at the point of death, and by the tears which furrowed her cheeks she gave proof at once of her past and present affliction. Thereupon Cuthbert went up to her, and kissed the child, and gave her his blessing, and said, "Fear not, neither be sad. Assuredly this your child shall live, neither shall any other of your household die of this plague." And his words

¹ Bede, 'Vita Cuthberti,' c. xxxii.

came true, and both mother and son lived long afterwards to testify to the truth of his words.¹

Not long after this he paid a visit to Carlisle, partly to ordain some priests, and partly to give the monastic habit to some holy women, and establish schools. It was now that he once more met the hermit-priest of Derwentwater, Herebert, his dear friend, who was wont to come to him every year "to receive the admonitions of everlasting salvation." The two spent some time in mutual converse, and Cuthbert, assured that the day of his death was drawing nigh, warned his friend of what was coming, and asked if there was anything he needed before they parted. Whereupon Herebert replied that the dearest wish of his heart was that they twain might on the same day pass to the brightness of Paradise, which came to pass.

Conscious that his hour was nigh, Cuthbert now resolved, after a final circuit of his diocese, to lay down his pastoral office and return to his old hermitage. Accordingly, soon after Christmas, A.D. 686, he entered the boat which was to convey him from Lindisfarne to his cell. As he stepped into it, one of the brethren asked him when they should see him again. "When ye bring back my body

¹ Bede, 'Vita Cuthberti,' c. xxxiii.

hither," was his reply; and he repaired alone to his solitary isle "by prayer and meditation to burn away the thorns of worldly care."

The following February was drawing to a close, when he was seized with his death sickness. On the morning of his seizure, Herefrith, abbot of Lindisfarne, paid him a visit, and found him suffering from great prostration. The dying man had made all arrangements for his burial. A stone coffin, the gift of Abbot Cudda, lay concealed beneath the turf on the north side of his oratory; a shroud was ready, wrought for him by Verca, abbess of Tynemouth.

After ministering to his wants, Herefrith returned to Lindisfarne, intending speedily to come back to the dying bishop. But wild winds rose in the first week of March, and for five days no boat could put out to sea. On the sixth Herefrith returned to Farne, and found Cuthbert lying in the little guest-chamber at the landing-place, with the ghastly hue of exhaustion in his eye. Thereupon he ministered to his immediate wants, and persuaded him to allow a few of the brethren whom he brought over to stay on the island. Then he begged him to allow his remains to be taken to Lindisfarne for interment. "It was my wish," replied the bishop, "to rest in the body here, where

I have fought my little wrestling, such as it was, for the Lord, where I desire to finish my course, and whence I hope to be raised up by the merciful Judge to a crown of righteousness. Moreover, I think it would be more advantageous to you that I should rest here, on account of the trouble you will have from fugitives and evil-doers, who will probably fly for refuge to my tomb.”¹ Then they besought him still more earnestly to yield to their request, and at last prevailed.

Ere long his sickness increased, and he perceived that he could not expect to linger long. Accordingly he bade the brethren convey him to his oratory, and then one of them was allowed to watch by him. It was about nine o'clock on Tuesday, March 19th, that they carried him thither, for his exceeding weakness forbade him to walk. All day he lay calmly awaiting his great change, and giving his last charges. As the night wore on he continued in prayer, and having received at the hands of Herefrith, “the communion of the Body and Blood of the Lord to fortify him for his departure,” he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and passed away without a groan to the joys of the kingdom of heaven.

It was the early morning of Wednesday, March

¹ Bede, ‘Vita S. Cuthberti,’ cxxxvii.

20th, A.D. 687. The rest of the brethren had been passing the night in watching and prayer, and were chanting the 59th Psalm,¹ which begins, "*O God, Thou hast cast us out, and scattered us abroad; Thou hast also been displeased; O turn Thee unto us again,*" when he who had been watching came in and announced that all was over. Straightway one of them ran and lighted two torches, and, holding one in either hand, went up to a higher place and waved them in the air. The brother who had been stationed at the watch-tower of Lindisfarne, straining his eyes across the dark waters saw the light waving to and fro. It was the signal agreed upon. He ran into the church with the tidings, and the brethren, who were singing the same Psalm, knew that the shepherd of Lammer-moor, the Apostle of the Lowlands, had passed from this mortal scene.

¹ The 60th according to our enumeration.

CHAPTER IX.

THE CONVERSION OF SUSSEX AND THE ISLE OF
WIGHT.

THUS gradually the northern, the central, and the eastern portions of England had, more or less, been won over to the Christian Faith. But while, in other parts of the island mission stations were gradually giving way to more permanent institutions, and the missionaries themselves were more and more becoming settled clergy, one realm, the South-Saxon, remained entirely heathen.

Traditionally Sussex was one of the oldest of the kingdoms. More than one hundred and ninety years before the time at which we have now arrived, the first Teutonic settlement on this coast had taken place. In the year A.D. 477, representatives of the great Saxon tribe which stretched from the Elbe to the Rhine, were seen pushing slowly along the strip of land which lay westward of the land of Kent, which the Jutes had made their own. Ella and his three sons landed at Cymenes-ora, probably Kynor, south of Regnum, whose chief, Cogidumnus, is referred to in the 'Agricola' of Tacitus, as one of those British

princes who maintained a constant fidelity to Rome. They took possession of Regnum, but the great Roman town Anderida, now Pevensey, at the end of the Southdowns, long held out against them. At last, A.D. 491, they captured it, and, so ran the pitiless record of the conquerors, "slew all that were therein; nor was there afterwards one Briton left," and slowly established themselves, along the line of coast as the "South Saxe," or South Saxons.

But they had little more than the strip of coast. They were cut off from all intercourse with the other Saxon kingdoms, as they were successively formed, by the great forest of Anderida, the famous Andredes-weald, or the "wood of the uninhabited district."¹ This vast sheet of scrub, woodland, and waste, represented in miniature the boundless wilderness of maple and birch, or fir and oak, which at this time well-nigh covered the whole extent of France, Switzerland, Belgium, and both banks of the Rhine, with such forests as are scarcely to be seen in America, and of which there does not remain the slightest trace in the ancient world.² Away it stretched, wave after wave

¹ "The vast tract in Kent and Sussex which is now called the Weald (German, *wald*, wood) is the remains of this ancient forest."—I. Taylor's 'Words and Places,' p. 244.

² On the forests of Gaul and Germany, see Montalembert's 'Monks of the West'; Kingsley's 'Roman and Teuton,' p. 226.

of oak and beech, for more than a hundred miles, from the borders of Kent to the Hampshire downs, and northwards almost to the Thames, while on the east the Romney Marsh formed another barrier between the new-comers and their Kentish neighbours. Thus shut in by a huge dim forest on the north and by marshes on the east, the South Saxons knew nothing, or next to nothing, of the influences which were being brought to bear on Kent and Wessex, Mercia and Northumbria.

It is true that about A.D. 661, their king Ethelwalch, by the persuasion of Wulfhere,¹ king of Mercia, had become a Christian and had married Eoba, already a Christian, from the Hwiccian country, which included Worcestershire, Gloucestershire, and Somersetshire, north of the Avon. But neither king nor queen could produce any effect on the paganism of their subjects. One, indeed, from this isolated quarter of the island, Damian, succeeded Ithamar in A.D. 656 as Bishop of Rochester, but none are recorded as following his example and adopting Christianity. Thus even this unpromising field was not unvisited by Christian zeal. A few Irish monks, whom Ethelwalch invited to his barbarous realm, made their way thither with Dicul, their abbot, at their head, and opened a small religious house at Bosham, three

¹ See above, p. 90.

miles to the west of "Cissa's-caster," at the head of the creek which forms a harbour. Here they settled down surrounded by woods and by the sea. Dicul had been one of the companions of Furse, whom we have seen labouring with success in East Anglia.¹ But he made no impression on the heathen Saxons. Not one of the natives cared either to follow their course of life or listen to their preaching.² The zeal which had accomplished so much in other mission-fields, both in England and on the Continent, here seemed to spend itself in vain. The Irish missionary and his few companions were constrained to live amidst the woods, bearing the terrible burden of apparent failure, and destined to see another enter into their labours.

In the year A.D. 666, Wilfrid, who the year before had been consecrated Bishop of York with so much splendour at Compiègne,³ sailed for England with one hundred and twenty attendants. An adverse wind drove them on the Sussex coast. The Saxon pirates had become merciless wreckers. They thought everything cast by the winds and the sea on their coasts their undoubted property, the crew and passengers of vessels driven on shore their lawful slaves. Wilfrid and his clergy tried to buy them off, and then

¹ See above, p. 55.

² Bede, 'H. E.,' iv. 13.

³ See above, p. 88.

commended themselves to God in prayer, while a heathen priest, taking his stand on a high mound, urged his people to the attack, and tried to practise magic on the strangers who had approached their shores. A fight ensued, and a stone from a sling struck the priest on the forehead and terminated his incantations. His death only roused the men of Sussex to greater efforts. Three times the attack was renewed, and three times it was beaten off. At length, when they had lost five men, the tide rose and floated the vessel off, and they were enabled to reach Sandwich in safety.

Fifteen years afterwards, Wilfrid returned to take a noble revenge for their inhospitable reception. He had, in the mean time, made trial of "the changes and chances of this mortal life." Alienated, from Egfrid, the new king of Northumbria, through his severe advice to Queen Etheldreda to persist in her vows of chastity, superseded by Archbishop Theodore in the see of York, he appealed to the Pope, and set out, in A.D. 678, to plead his cause at Rome. A violent storm drove him on the coast of Friesland, and he was hospitably received by Adalgis, the chief, and his people. His coming seemed to influence the elements. Before, the natives had been suffering from drought and bad seasons, and had hardly been able to obtain a livelihood. Now, the harvest im-

proved, and the fishing was signally successful. These temporal advantages paved the way for spiritual conquests. Wilfrid preached the Word, and the people not only listened, but with their chief consented to be baptized.¹ Two years afterwards he succeeded in reaching Rome, and his appeal was decided in his favour. Agatho the Pope issued his commands that he should be reinstated in the see. Armed with this decree, Wilfrid found himself once more in Northumbria, but found also that the protection of the Pope did not avail him, and he was thrust into prison with every mark of dishonour. At length released, he travelled across the border to Mercia and Wessex, but in neither kingdom was his safety secured, and he resolved to seek a refuge amongst the men of Sussex, and he passed through the dark forest of the Andredes-weald, and made for the coast of Ethelwalch, who had given him a solemn assurance of protection.

Fifteen years before, he had barely escaped with his life from the ferocity of the people led on by their heathen priests. He now came, protected by the promise of the king, resolved to see if he might not effect in Sussex what he had already achieved in Friesland. "It is observed of nightingales," quaintly writes Fuller, "that they sing the sweetest when

¹ Eddii, 'Vita S. Wilfridi,' cap. 25.

furthest from their nests." It seems to have been Wilfrid's destiny to do God most service when "at the greatest distance from his home." His coming was most opportune. For upwards of three years the wretched people had suffered from drought, followed by famine so severe, that in the depth of their despair they had linked themselves hand in hand by forties and fifties, and sought relief from their misery by drowning themselves in the sea. Moreover, though they occupied a long line of coast, they were but little acquainted with the art of fishing, except for eels, and had the greatest difficulty in obtaining a livelihood. Wilfrid saw that he must first feed his flock before he preached the Word to them. He and his attendant priests, Eappa and Padda, Burg-helm and Oiddi, collected all the nets they could find that had been used in eel-fishing and put out to sea. Their efforts were successful. They hauled in upwards of three hundred fish of different sorts, which they divided into three parts, one for the poor, one for the lenders of the nets, and a third for themselves. Again the experience gained in Friesland repeated itself. By the good service he had rendered them "the bishop turned the hearts of the people powerfully to love him, and they were the more ready to listen hopefully to his preaching about heavenly benefits after they had, through his means, received tem-

poral good.”¹ Relieved from their physical misery, the rude people gathered round their benefactor, and listened eagerly to his words. Some months were spent in regularly instructing them, and eventually thanes and aldermen alike agreed to receive baptism at his hands and those of his four priests. The day that witnessed this grateful scene, witnessed also the return of the long-desired rain. The windows of heaven were opened, the refreshing showers fell gently and copiously, the parched earth began to resume its freshness and verdure, the year came round again glad and fruitful.

Thus the humane use of ordinary knowledge gave the bishop a hold over the hearts and minds of the people, which he could not have gained in any other way. He now became the “Apostle of the South Saxons,” and the first bishop who took up his residence in their country. Grateful for the blessings he and his people had received, Ethelwalch, like Ethelbert at Canterbury,² made over to him his own place of abode, and, in addition, a tract of eighty-seven hydes, consisting of Selsey, or “the Seal’s Island.” It was, in fact, a peninsula covered with forests, and joined on to the mainland by a strip of ground about a sling’s throw across.³ Here Wilfrid

¹ Bede, ‘H. E.,’ iv. 13.

² See above, p. 29.

³ Bede, ‘H. E.,’ iv. 13.

was to establish a home for himself and the companions of his exile ; here he was to open a centre of missionary work as Bishop of Selsey and of the South Saxons, and here the see continued till it was removed to Chichester. For the Saxon cathedral that now gradually rose, as also for the monastery, we now look in vain. The modern village of Selsey, about half a mile from the sea, is traditionally said to have been once in the centre of the peninsula. The site of the old cathedral is now covered by water ; and in Camden's time the foundations were actually visible at low tide.¹ Thus the sea has swept away the traces of Wilfrid's toil and his South-Saxon episcopate. He commenced it with characteristic zeal and hopefulness, and with an act of kindness which revealed the true spirit of the faith he proclaimed. Together with the estate of Selsey the king gave him two hundred and fifty serfs, male and female, who lived upon it. All these, after a while, he admitted to baptism, and so made free of that kingdom in which there is "neither male nor female, neither bond nor free." We may believe that Dicul, whom he found in his little Christian fortress, was encouraged to more active exertions on behalf of a people amongst whom he so long seemed to have laboured in vain. Wilfrid placed Eappa, one of the priests who accompanied

¹ Britan., i. 199 ; see Murray's 'Sussex,' p. 88, new edition.

him, over the monastery, and here, for five years, he continued to labour, and to direct the little Northumbrian colony, which he had planted in these wilds of heathen Sussex, to reclaim the people from their rude errors, and to win over to the faith of Christ a province where paganism is said to have intrenched itself as in its last stronghold.

A remarkable incident, which took place during his stay, served to increase his influence, and to extend the field of his labours. Cadwalla, a youth of the royal house of Wessex, but connected apparently by descent with the British race, and identified by some with the son of that Cadwallon who fell at Heavens Field,¹ had incurred the jealousy of the West-Saxon king Kentwin, and was living the life of a wild outlaw amidst the forests of the Andredes-weald. Wilfrid aided him in his exile—an exile himself—and by his kindness gained a hold on his affections. Suddenly he appeared in arms, gathered around him a band of men bent on wild adventure, slew Ethelwalch, Wilfrid's patron and Kentwin's ally, and ravaged Sussex, till he was obliged to retire before two earls, Berchtun and Andhun, who had adopted the Christian faith. In A.D. 685 Kentwin died, and Cadwalla ascended the throne, and again entered Sussex, ravaged it, slew Berchtem, and then resolved to push his con-

¹ See above, p. 60.

quests still further. To the west of Sussex a colony of the Jutes had long settled in the Isle of Wight,¹ and the island itself had been bestowed by Wulfhere, king of Mercia, as a gift upon Ethelwalch, together with a strip of Hampshire called Meon. Cadwalla now resolved to conquer the island thoroughly, and people it once more with men from Wessex. Ethelwalch had done little or nothing towards Christianizing this addition to his kingdom, and the people were sunk in heathenism. Though not himself baptized, Cadwalla vowed that if victorious in the struggle for the isle, he would devote a fourth part of it and of the spoils to the God whom his friend Wilfrid worshipped. The contest began, and apparently was fiercely disputed. Cadwalla himself was wounded, but the subjugation of the island was secured.

A pathetic tragedy marked the conquest. Two young brothers of the under-king Oswald had fled to the mainland, and concealed themselves at Stoneham, on the Itchen. But their place of hiding was revealed to Cadwalla, and he doomed them to death. An abbot named Kynibert, who was living not far off in a monastery at Redbridge, mustered courage to go to Cadwalla, who was being cured of

¹ In the laws of Edward the Confessor the men of the Isle of Wight are called Guti, *i.e.* Jutes or Goths.

the wounds he had received while fighting in the island, and begged that if the youths must die, they might first be instructed in the elements of the Christian faith and baptized. The king did not object, and the abbot devoted himself to instructing them in the faith, and afterwards admitted them to baptism. Then when the day appointed for their death arrived, they met it without a murmur, assured that for them it was the passage to life eternal.¹

Christianity now made its way into the island, for Cadwalla kept his promise, and bestowed upon Wilfrid three hundred hydes of land. He assigned them to his nephew Bernwin, and deputed a priest

¹ Compare a striking parallel to this from the life of the late Bishop of New Zealand. "I have seen myself what men call the lowest types of humanity. I have seen the Australasian blacks; I have seen the poor benighted men in Erromango, who have twice killed the missionaries of the Gospel who landed on their shores; and I am sure that those men have the same capacity, in all necessary respects, for the reception of Divine truth that any one of us is gifted with by God. I have been present with some of them on occasions of which I will not speak at length, when one of this despised race was sentenced to death, and I attended him at his execution. I must say that, with the imperfect knowledge of our language, with all the difficulty of communication with the man that I had, he left upon my mind at the moment that his irons were being struck off, the impression that he died with just as much of simple faith as was accepted by Jesus Christ from the penitent on the Cross."—'Principles of Mission-Work and Hindrances to it,' pp. 10, 11.

named Hiddila to assist him in preaching the Word and baptizing any who desired to lay aside their heathen errors.

Thus this last remnant of a heathen people was gathered into the Church, and the annihilation of the old Teutonic idolatry as a system of formal worship, which began with Augustine in Kent was completed by Wilfrid in the Isle of Wight

CHAPTER X.

THE SCHOOL OF MALMESBURY AND THE HERDSMAN
OF WHITBY.

BUT the annihilation of Teutonic idolatry was only part of the work which was to be accomplished. The planting of the truth which should absorb the ancient errors was the most important as it was the most difficult part of the task which lay before the missionary clergy who founded the churches of our land. The effectual planting of truth implies learning, and learning implies careful study, and study requires the teacher and the school. While the infant Church was still struggling into existence, the religious condition of the people was too unsettled to give much encouragement to or develop knowledge and learning.

But as soon as the first stage of the work of the missionaries was completed, and the whole country had nominally embraced the faith, it is deeply instructive to notice how soon teachers arose in the newly-planted English Churches to supply what was needed for the carrying on of the building up of the

Church to the next stage of development, and providing Christian literature for the newly-evangelized people.

Of these teachers one of the earliest was Aldhelm, abbot of Malmesbury, A.D. 671, and bishop of Sherborne, A.D. 705. He was the son of Kenter or Kenter, and was of princely West Saxon blood. From his earliest years he showed an extraordinary faculty for acquiring all the knowledge of his day. Born about the middle of the seventh century, he was first educated under an Irish monk named Maildulf, or Moeldubh, who had obtained leave to settle down within the walls of the old castle of Bladon, or Ingelborne, and had there lived according to monastic rule and taken pupils for his subsistence. He introduced all the culture for which the Irish schools were noted, and the settlement which grew up around the spot became known as "Maildulf's burgh," or Malmesbury.¹

From Malmesbury Aldhelm went to Canterbury, and there studied under Theodore and Hadrian, learning Greek and Latin, and even Hebrew, and astonishing his teachers by his aptitude for acquiring knowledge. Returning thence to Wessex, he resumed his studies under Maildulf, and having been ordained priest, spent the following fourteen years at

¹ Bright, 'Early English Church History,' p. 259.

Malmesbury, visiting Canterbury from time to time. On the death of Maildulf he became abbot, and received the charge of the community at Malmesbury. As abbot he greatly promoted the spread of Christianity, and entering heartily into the cause of education, made the schools of Wessex in the eighth century rival even those of Northumbria.

An anecdote, derived from Alfred the Great, throws a curious light upon the religious history of Wessex, and the expedients to which Aldhelm resorted to win over the rude people of the countryside to some knowledge of Christian truth. Observing that they hastened home from the service without waiting for the sermon, he stationed himself at the bridge which led from the town into the country, or at the junction of the cross-roads, and there sang to the harp ballads in the Saxon tongue on subjects likely to attract the people. The art of singing and composing ballads he had learnt at Canterbury, and now he turned it to good account. Fascinated by the sound of his harp, the West Saxons stopped and listened to his music, while he glided from song and ballad into a more serious strain, and took occasion to give his audience spiritual instruction for their souls.

Thus able to make himself "all things to all men," it is no wonder that he attracted scholars to Malmes-

bury in great numbers, and won for himself the deep affection of his pupils. King Ine gave several pieces of land for the development of the monastery at Malmesbury, and Aldhelm was enabled to open another offshoot at Frome, and yet another at Bradford-on-Avon, while amongst his disciples was Pecthelm, who afterwards held the restored bishopric of Ninian at Whithern or Candida Casa.¹ While acting as abbot, he wrote, at the request of a synod of bishops, a letter to Gerontius, king of the Damnonian Britons, on the subject of the Paschal cycle, and succeeded in gaining over the king and his people to the Roman usage.

In the year A.D. 705, the great West Saxon diocese was divided. Winchester, including Hampshire and Surrey, was assigned to Daniel, the great patron and supporter of the mission work of Boniface amongst the Teutons of the Continent;² Wiltshire, Dorsetshire, Berkshire, and part of Somerset were annexed to the new see of Sherborne, and over it Aldhelm was appointed to preside, but he only lived four years after his consecration, and died in the little wooden church of Dalting, in Somersetshire.

"Aldhelm," it has been observed, "occupies a very important position in the history of English literature.

¹ Bright, p. 399; see 'Conversion of the Celts,' p. 105.

² See 'Conversion of the Continental Teutons.'

He was the first Englishman who cultivated classical learning with any success, and the first of whom any literary remains are preserved. His extant writings by no means justify his claim to the character of a great scholar, but they show that he possessed considerable knowledge of books and great facility in writing very involved and elaborate Latin.”¹ Some of his vernacular songs were still in common use in the days of Alfred, and what he himself no doubt despised “in comparison with the lame statelyness of his poor hexameters,” ought to have been his pride, as it doubtless was a means of winning not a few to the faith, on whom severer language would have been tried in vain.

But what Aldhelm regarded as of little worth compared with his more ambitious Latin poetry, had become, in the hands of another, an effective vehicle of popular instruction. His Latin culture might be composed for the schools, it was not and could not be intended for the people. The poetry of Cædmon enabled biblical lore to spread amongst serfs and shepherds, and gives him a marked place in this period when Christianity was struggling to release the Teutonic mind from the glamour of old heathen beliefs.

¹ Professor Stubbs' article in Smith's 'Dict. of Christian Biography'; and comp. Milman, 'Lat. Christ.,' ii. 279.

Cædmon was a lay brother of the monastery of Sheoneshall, or Whitby, where a great conventual house had risen on the lower Celtic model of the family or the clan round the abbess Hilda, the grand-niece of Edwin of Northumbria. He had reached a somewhat advanced age and had learnt nothing of the art of verse. Indeed so ignorant was he of song, that when on festive occasions it was usual for each guest to play the "gleeman," the very sight of the harp coming round was enough to force him to leave the room. But one evening, so the story ran, he had gone forth from the house where an entertainment was going on, to a stable to see to his cattle for the night, and had lain him down to rest, when in his sleep a person seemed to stand by him, and, calling him by name, said, "Cædmon, sing some song to me." "I cannot sing," he answered; "and therefore did I leave the house and retire to this place." "Nay, but thou must sing to me," replied his visitor. "And what shall I sing?" rejoined Cædmon. "Sing the beginning of created things," said the other. Thereupon a strange power seemed to come over him, and he burst into song respecting

"The Maker's might, and His mind-thought,
Works of the glorious Father, as He of each wonder,
Eternal Lord, created the beginning.

He erst shaped for children of men
Heaven as a roof,—the Holy Creator :
Then the middle world did mankind's Guardian,
Eternal Lord, afterwards create,
Earth for men, Lord Almighty."

In the morning, awaking from his sleep, he found the words still in his memory, and was able to add more to the same effect in verse worthy of the Deity. Thereupon he told everything that had taken place to the bailiff, his master. The bailiff repeated it to the abbess. She called together a number of learned men, and before them Cædmon told his dream and recited his verses. All agreed that a singular gift had been bestowed upon him from on high, and read to him next a portion of the Bible, and desired him to put it into metre. Next morning he repeated the lines he had composed "in most excellent verse." Thereupon Hilda made him enter the monastery, and gave orders that he should be taught the whole series of sacred history. He listened attentively to all he there learnt, and, "as it were, like a clean animal chewing the cud, converted the narrative into most harmonious verse, and sweetly repeating the same made his masters in their turn his learners. He sang of the creation of the world, of the origin of man, and of the history of Genesis ; of the departure of the children of Israel out of Egypt, and

their entering into the land of promise, with many other histories from Holy Writ ; of the incarnation, passion, and resurrection of our Lord, and of His ascension into heaven ; of the coming of the Holy Ghost, and the preaching of the Apostles ; also of the terrors of future judgment and the delights of heaven, besides much more concerning the Divine benefits and judgments ; by all which he endeavoured to turn men away from the love of vice, and excite in them the love of good actions.”¹

Thus was the whole history of the Bible and the whole Creed of Christianity, in the imaginative form which it then wore, made at once accessible to the English people. From their native forests the Teutons had brought their love of song, and from his place of honour in the hall the bard had been wont to sing of the victories of kings and chiefs, of adventures and of battles. Cædmon now wedded to verse all the great facts in the Bible history, and the articles of the Christian Creed. His poetry became the Bible of the people. It was far more powerful in kindling emotion and eliciting sympathy than a merely literal translation of the Scriptures would have been, and it was a great thing for the spread of Christianity that he was thus enabled to turn to account the minstrel's art, and retaining the

¹ Bede, ‘H. E.,’ iv. 24.

vernacular language, to spread a knowledge of Biblical lore through the channel of native song. Others wrote for the schools, for thanes and priests, he wrote for shepherds and herdsmen, and thus enabled the new Faith to win its way amongst the lower as well as the higher orders of the people. Moreover the "brief, sententious, and alliterative cast" of his song seemed not unsuited to the parallelism of the Hebrew verse,¹ and thus the earliest Christian poetry arose amongst the Teutons of Northumbria, and afforded a "dim prophecy of what that poetry might become in Dante and Milton."

How long he remained in the monastery of Whitby we know not. Bede's story of his death is in exquisite keeping with the life of the father of English song, and the poetical teacher of a newly-converted people. For a fortnight he was ill from some bodily infirmity, "which seemed to prepare the way for him, but was so moderate that he could talk and walk the whole time."² He was not far from the chamber or house into which, according to monastic usage, those that were sick and likely shortly to die were carried. One evening he bade the attendant make up a bed for him there. The man marvelled why he should desire it, yet did what he was ordered.

¹ Milman, 'Latin Christianity,' ii. 278.

² Bede, 'H. E.,' iv. 424.

They entered the chamber, and after some pleasant converse with those there, Cædmon asked if they had the Eucharist within. "What need of the Housel," they answered; "thou art not likely to die, thou talkest so joyfully with us, as if thou wert in perfect health." "However," said he, "bring me the Housel." Then they brought it, and he took it into his hand, and asked whether they were all in charity with him. They said they were all in perfect charity, and in their turn asked him whether he was in the same mind towards them. "Dear children," he replied, "I am well disposed towards *all* the servants of God." Then he received the Eucharist; and when midnight had turned, asked how soon the brethren would be awakened for matins. "It will not be long," they answered. "It is well," he rejoined; "let us wait for that hour." Then he signed himself with the sign of the Cross, and laid his head on the pillow and fell asleep, and passed away shortly afterwards in his slumber.

CHAPTER XI.

BEDE AND THE SCHOOL OF JARROW.

FROM Cædmon and Aldhelm it is natural to pass to the life of one who pre-eminently reflected the best results of English Christianity, who centred in himself and his writings nearly all the knowledge of his day, and did as much, if not more, than any one else to kindle and keep alive the flame of learning in the West.

In the year A.D. 684, Benedict Biscop, of whom we have already spoken as the intimate friend of Wilfrid, received from Ecgfrid, king of Northumbria, a grant of seventy hydes of land of royal demesne at the mouth of the river Wear. Here he built the monastery of St. Peter, Wearmouth, and in the erection of the church and other parts of the monastery employed masons skilled in working stone after the Roman manner, whom he fetched over from France. When the walls were finished, he sent for glaziers, whose art as yet was unknown in England, and filled the windows with glass and lattice-work, and for the music and ritual obtained

the services of John, the archchanter and abbot of St. Martin's at Rome.

So pleased was Ecgfrid with this monastery, that he resolved to promote the foundation of a sister monastery which should be dedicated to St. Paul. His former grants had been well and usefully employed, and now he gave forty more hydes of land, and the energetic Benedict selected for his new foundation a green and lonely hill, which from the Saxon word "Gyrwy," a marsh, but here applied to the neighbouring "Slake," or smooth bay, derived the name of Jarrow. An important Roman station once occupied its site, as is proved from various inscribed altars which have been found there. At the present day it is surrounded by the black atmosphere and noxious vapours with which the chemical factories and coal traffic of the neighbouring Tyne almost hide it. Hence it becomes difficult to realize the associations of the past, which make the place one of the most interesting spots in the North of England.

Here, however, Benedict laid the foundations of his new monastery in A.D. 680, and hither, a year afterwards, having completed the buildings actually required for conventual life, he sent seventeen monks, with Ceolfrith their abbot at their head, to take up their abode in their new home. Amongst

the monastic colonists thus sent was a boy of about nine years of age, whom his parents had handed over to the care of Benedict.

The boy's name was Beda, but we know neither the names of his parents nor the exact place of his birth. Local history and tradition fix it at Jarrow, but this is not supported by any positive evidence, though the date of his birth may be fixed with tolerable certainty as having taken place in A.D. 673. He speaks of himself as "born of a noble stock of the Angles," and it is curious that amongst the princes of Lindsey we find a Beda¹ who had a son named Biscop. Whatever may have been his origin and parentage, certain it is that he was at the early age of seven given by his kinsfolk to abbot Benedict to be educated, and under his care he was brought up first at Wearmouth and afterwards at Jarrow.

At Jarrow he passed the rest of his life in study and devotion, an uneventful period of about fifty-four years. "As we look back upon these years, so unmarked in regard to his personal history, and conspicuous for nothing which could associate him with what may be called the political history of his church, we seem to be looking, not on a landscape of grand and varied outline, but on some rich level land watered by soft streams and reposing in

¹ Moberly, 'Introduction to Bede's H. E.,' p. xii.

broad sunlight. There is monotony, but it is the monotony of tranquil, regular, and nobly fruitful work,¹ and it testifies to the rapidity with which Anglo-Saxon Christianity became associated with and the parent of literary culture.

"I spent my whole life in the same monastery," he says, "and while attentive to the rule of my order and the service of the Church, my constant pleasure lay in learning, or teaching, or writing." The words sketch for us a scholar's life, the more touching in its simplicity that it is the life of the first great English scholar."² At the age of nineteen he was ordained deacon by John, bishop of Hexham, afterwards St. John of Beverley, and remained from that time tasting the tranquil pleasures of learning, till at the age of thirty he was ordained priest by the same bishop, in A.D. 702. From this time he remained devoted to the joint monastery, and never appears to have wandered from the banks of the Wear farther than to York, and this only shortly before his death. A letter from Pope Sergius to Ceolfrith has been preserved, in which he invites Bede to Rome,³ but its acceptance was probably prevented by the death of that pontiff, and the frequent visits of Benedict to

¹ Bright, p. 326.

² Green's 'English People,' i. 65.

See article by Professor Stubbs on "Bede," in Smith's 'Dictionary of Christian Biography.'

Rome had made up for any personal loss he might sustain. Materials for study had been accumulating in Northumbria, which gave to Bede advantages that could not have been found anywhere else in Europe at the time. "The tradition of the older Irish teachers still lingered to direct the young scholar into the path of Scriptural interpretation to which he chiefly owed his fame. Greek, a rare accomplishment in the West, came to him from the school which the Greek archbishop Theodore founded beneath the walls of Canterbury. His skill in the Roman chant was derived from a Roman cantor whom Pope Vitalian had sent in the train of Benedict Biscop. Little by little the young scholar thus made himself master of the whole range of the science of his time; he became, as Burke rightly styled him, "the father of English learning."¹

It is interesting to notice the variety of his instructors, and the sources whence his varied stores of knowledge reached him. Trumbert, the disciple of St. Chad, and Sigfrid, the fellow-pupil of St. Cuthbert under Boisil and Eata, imparted to him the Irish knowledge of Scripture and discipline. Acca, the bishop of Hexham and pupil of Wilfrid, gave him the special lore of the Roman school, while his monastic learning came from Lerins and the many

¹ Green, i. 65.

continental monasteries which Benedict Biscop had visited.

He himself has described the nature of his literary studies. "I ever found it sweet," he says, "to learn, or to teach, or to write." He had but small aid from others. "I am my own secretary," he writes; "I make my own notes. I am my own librarian." He had the whole world of letters to unfold to his countrymen. His countrymen were altogether unacquainted with even the names, much less the writings of the great men of pagan or Christian antiquity. He was resolved to be the interpreter of the thoughts of the past to the men of his own age. He possessed some knowledge of Hebrew. He certainly knew Greek. He quotes from Plato and Aristotle, Seneca and Cicero, Lucretius and Ovid, Virgil and Terence. "The earlier fathers were, of course, in familiar use. The diversity as well as the extent of his reading is remarkable; grammar, rhetoric, poetry, biography, arithmetic, chronology, the holy places, the Paschal controversy, epigrams, hymns, sermons, pastoral admonitions, and the conduct of penitents; even speculations on natural science, on which he specially quotes Pliny, furnished work for his pen, besides his great works on history and the interpretation of Scripture. On all these points his knowledge

was thoroughly up to the learning of the day; his judgment independent, and his conclusions sound. He must have had good teachers as well as a good library, and an insatiable desire of learning.”¹

When we take into account that England was, in his day, hardly emerging from barbarism, we cannot but feel some pride at the thought that after his death forty-five works remained to attest his prodigious industry and his unceasing literary activity. The knowledge of the earliest English converts was naturally extremely scanty. That of the native teachers themselves was often limited to the Creed and the Lord's Prayer. Some knew nothing of Latin, and for them Bede translates these indispensable “Manuals of Christian Faith” into Anglo-Saxon. With him our literature takes its beginning and strikes its first roots. The foreign bishops who had settled in the country were missionaries, not writers, and the native prelates were too much occupied with the practical duties of their office to devote much time to theological study. Thus theology in England may be said to have commenced with Bede, and it was derived directly from the true fountain of all Christian teaching, the sacred Scriptures. It consists of commentaries on well-nigh the whole Bible, all of

¹ Professor Stubbs' article “Bede,” in Smith's ‘Dictionary of Christian Biography.’

which are dedicated to Bishop Acca, who succeeded his master, Wilfrid, in the see of Hexham in A.D. 709. Acca's own love for learning was considerable, and he had distinguished himself in the adornment of churches, the collection of theological books, and the improvement of Church music. But his great claim to our grateful recollection is the encouragement he gave to Bede in his labours as a commentator on the Scriptures. While yet only an abbot, we find him requesting Bede to collect, as from a "flowering paradise," the best thoughts of the Fathers on the beginning of Genesis, for the sake of those who could not use the originals."¹ On another occasion he requests him to undertake an allegorical exposition of the first book of Samuel; on another a Patristic commentary on St. Luke; and again, afterwards, one on the gospel of St. Mark.² Thus encouraged by "the dearest and most loving of prelates living on the earth," Bede pursued his labours, and the result testifies to the assiduity with which they were prosecuted. His list of his own works includes—

(i.) Of Commentaries on the Old Testament: Genesis four books, derived chiefly from Basil, Ambrose, and Augustine; three books on Samuel; on Kings,

¹ Bede, Op., i. 198 (ed. Giles).

² Bede, i. 177; x. 2.

thirty questions dedicated to Northelm ; three books on Proverbs ; seven books on Canticles ; extracts from Jerome on Isaiah, Daniel, the twelve minor prophets, and part of Jeremiah ; three books on Ezra and Nehemiah ; one on Habakkuk ; one on Tobit ; chapters of lessons on the Pentateuch, Joshua, Judges, Kings, Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Canticles, Isaiah, Ezra, and Nehemiah.

(ii.) Of Commentaries on the New Testament : Four books on St. Mark ; six books on St. Luke ; two books of Homilies on St. Luke ; ten books on the Acts ; a book on each of the Catholic Epistles ; three books on the Apocalypse ; chapters of lessons on the whole of the New Testament except the Gospels.

Bede's interpretation of the sacred books is that which then universally prevailed in the Church. It was pre-eminently allegorical. No word was thought not to "enshrine a religious and typical sense." Even the New Testament, the Gospels, and Acts, have their hidden and mysterious as well as their historical signification.¹

Besides these he wrote treatises on the elementary parts of different sciences, biographies of the abbots of his own monastery, and works on astronomy and chronology. But the work which has chiefly handed

¹ Milman, 'Latin Christianity,' ii. 274.

down his name to posterity is his 'Ecclesiastical History' of his own country. Nearly every kingdom of England furnished him with materials for it. Abbot Albanus furnished the details of the Kentish Church; the monks of Lastingham supplying the traditions of Cedd and Chad, and the story of the conversion of Mercia; Esi gave him particulars respecting East Anglia; Cynibert respecting Lindsey; Pope Gregory III. gave orders that the records of the Roman See should be examined in his behalf, and a London priest searched the records for the monk of distant Jarrow.

Few works have more eminently deserved their popularity. Not only does it tell us how England was won over to the faith, but it tells us the tale with simplicity, and genuine, unaffected piety. Employed on a theme which, in the prevailing belief of miraculous stories, could scarcely be treated of without incurring the charge of superstition, he is eminently truthful. The wonders that he relates on his own account are easily referred to very conceivable natural causes; and scarcely in any case is a reputed miracle recounted without an authority."¹ Of none of the Fathers do we know so little the personal history; but in none does the personal character come out

¹ Article "Bede," Smith's 'Dict. of Christian Biography'; and compare Burton, 'Hist. Scot.,' i. 68.

more strongly and clearly in his works. He was a genuine Englishman, loving old English songs, and hating whatever tended to degrade his country or weaken its national life. Warm-hearted, affectionate, sympathetic, he lived in his pupils and his pupils in him. They are his "dearest sons," he is their "dear father," and "most beloved master." His piety, his gentleness, his simplicity breathe through every line of the history of the Church he loved so well. "Never did I see or hear," says his biographer, "of any one who was so diligent in rendering thanks to the living God."¹ He lives like St. Cedd and St. Chad in the thought of the divine judgment and the divine longsuffering; he regards trials and afflictions as "grace-tokens,"² and he closes his story of the conversion of his own land with a thanksgiving to the "good Jesus" for the "sweet draught of divine knowledge vouchsafed to him, and prays that he may "in due time come to Him, Who is the fountain of all wisdom, and always stand in His presence, Who liveth and reigneth world without end."³

The history was finished A.D. 731. Three years after this he visited Egbert, recently consecrated

¹ See Cuthbert's Life.

² Bright's 'Early English Church,' p. 328, *n*.

³ Bede, 'H. E.' v. 24.

bishop of York, and employed himself with his usual energy in promoting the foundation of the famous school in that city. He promised to repeat his visit in the following year. But he was prostrated with asthma, and sent a long and interesting letter to Egbert, breathing the purest patriotism and the sincerest love for the souls of men, and offering many valuable suggestions as to the state of his diocese and the reformation he deemed necessary. After this his infirmities rapidly increased, and with the Easter of A.D. 735 it became clear that the end was not far off. But still he continued to labour, preserving his sweet ways and gay good humour, and in spite of increasing prostration and prolonged sleeplessness, listened to the reading and singing of his pupils, or advised them about their studies. Words of Holy Scripture, and particularly those of St. Paul, "*It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God,*"¹ were constantly on his lips. He repeated, also, from time to time, some verses of old English songs,² the burden of which was the neces-

¹ Heb. x. 31.

² The words he sang were :—

"Fore then neidfaerae
naenig uiuirthit
thonc snottura
than him tharf sie
to ymb hycganna.

sity of an early preparation for the "need-fare," and "Death's stern must go," and the day of doom. Often, too, he gave thanks to God for the afflictions laid upon him, and repeated the words of the Apostle, "*He scourgeth every son whom He receiveth*";¹ and dwelt on that saying of St. Ambrose, "I have not lived so as to be ashamed to live among you; but I do not fear to die, for we have a gracious God." Among the antiphons which he used to chant for his consolation and our comfort, says his biographer, was one for Ascension-Day, "O King of Glory, Lord of Hosts, who, as on this day, didst ascend far above all heavens, leave us not orphans," and when he came to the words "leave us not orphans," he burst into tears and wept much, and then, after an hour, began to repeat what he had then sang.

Thus the days wore on to Ascension-tide, and still

aer his hin iongae
 huaet his gastae
 godaes aeththa yflaes
 aefter deothdaege
 doemid uueorthae."

Which my friend Professor J. W. Hales translates thus :—

"Before the journey that all needs must go
 There is no man, though thoughtful ever so,
 That can discover, ere he pass the gates,
 What doom, or good or evil, him awaits."

¹ Heb. xii. 6.

he laboured on, dictating some extracts from Bishop Isidore, and anxious to complete his version in English of St. John's Gospel. The Tuesday before Ascension-day dawned, and his difficulty of breathing grew worse, while a slight swelling of the feet gave token of the approaching end. Still he continued dictating, and in his usual joyous way bade his scholars lose no time, saying, "I know not how long I may last; perhaps in a very short time my Maker may take me."

He lingered, however, through the night, and early on Wednesday morning, when the rest of his scholars had left him to walk in procession, according to the practice of the time, with the relics of the saints, he was left alone with one who still continued writing at his dictation. "There is still a chapter wanting," said the scribe, "and methinks it is difficult for thee to question thyself any longer." "It is easily done," said the dying man; "take thy pen and write quickly." Busily the scribe toiled on till three in the afternoon, then Bede bethought him of some little commissions he would have him execute before his death. "I have some valuables in my little chest," he said; "pepper, handkerchiefs, and incense. Run quickly, and bring the priests of the monastery to me, that I may make them such presents as God hath given me." He

then spoke to each in turn, and bade them pray for him, while they wept, and yet rejoiced to hear him say how his soul longed to behold Christ his king in His beauty." The hour of evensong drew near. "There is yet one sentence, dear master, unwritten," said the boy. "Write it quickly," said the other. "It is finished at last," said the little scribe. "Thou hast spoken truly," said the master; "all is finished now. Take my head between thy hands, and let me sit opposite to that holy place in which I was wont to pray. There let me sit and invoke my Father." And they placed him on the pavement of his cell, and he chanted "Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost," and as the chant ended he passed peacefully away.

CHAPTER XII.

ALCUIN AND THE SCHOOL OF YORK.

WITH the conversion of Sussex and the Isle of Wight the hopes of Gregory the Great at last received their accomplishment.

An island which had seemed lost to civilization had been won over to the Christian Faith, and a noble band had already gone forth and announced to their Teutonic brethren on the continent of Europe the glad tidings which they had received themselves. Wigbert and Willibrord, the two Ewalds, Winfrid and Willibald, Lioba and Thecla, Walpurga and Chunchild, and a host of others, whose names have perished, had left the shores of England, Teutons themselves, to become the apostles of Teutons.

But the conversion of England was destined to have more far-reaching results even in the court of Charles the Great.

While learning, as we have seen, had been growing in the schools of Northumbria and Kent, it had been declining on the Continent. But the opening

of the ninth century brought with it a marked change. The ravages of the Norsemen, added to the internal dissensions of the English kings, arrested the development of English learning and the progress of the English Church. While the Continent, under Charlemagne, was regaining comparative peace and organization, England began to relapse into a state of ignorance, and learning and literature seemed doomed to perish for a time, unless they could be transplanted to France and Germany till happier days should come.

Now did He, whose "never-failing providence ordereth all things in heaven and earth,"¹ give to the Church one, by whom this necessary transmission could be brought about, and the safety of the new-found learning be secured.

An account, therefore, of the conversion of England would be incomplete without a notice of the life and labours of Alcuin, one of the most energetic pioneers of early mediæval civilization.

Alcuin was a Northumbrian of noble lineage, and belonged to the same house from which sprang St. Willibrord, the apostle of the Frisians.²

The exact date of his birth and the names of his

¹ Collect for the Eighth Sunday after Trinity.

² See the 'Teutons on the Continent,' p. 96.

parents are alike unknown, but the year A.D. 735 may be accepted, according to the best authorities, as the nearest approximation to the year of his birth.

From early infancy he was brought up in the school which we have seen founded by Archbishop Egbert at York, and here he received instruction from the prelate himself and from Ethelbert, the master of the school, who became archbishop A.D. 767. He was always one of Egbert's favourite scholars, and the archbishop predicted great things in store for him in the future.

The nature of the instruction he received at York is described by his biographer, who drew his information from a pupil in the same school. It began with grammar, and led up through a course of secular literature and philosophy to the careful study of the Scriptures. The knowledge which Hadrian and Theodore had brought to our shores had not perished, and the education of Alcuin included "a fair acquaintance with the Latin poets, some knowledge of the Greek Fathers, and as much Hebrew as could be learnt from the study of St. Jerome."¹

He received the tonsure at an early period of his life, and was ordained deacon by Ethelbert soon

¹ See Professor Stubbs' article on "Alcuin," in Smith's 'Dictionary of Christian Biography,' i. 72-75.

after A.D. 767. But the schools of Northumbria were not destined to be the chief centres of his activity. While yet young he became a frequent traveller between England and the Continent.

During his first journey he visited Rome, and spent a short time perfecting his studies in one or two of the French monasteries. His second visit to Italy must be assigned to some year between A.D. 767 and 780. On this occasion he was intrusted with a mission from Ethelbert to Charlemagne, and either now, or during his previous visit, listened to a disputation between a learned Jew and Peter of Pisa, who was the Emperor's instructor in grammar. Charlemagne seems to have received the Northumbrian monk with much favour, and the acquaintance now begun ripened into a lifelong friendship.

The object of his journey having been accomplished, Alcuin returned to York. It is uncertain whether, on the promotion of Ethelbert to the archbishopric, he became master of the school where he had been himself so diligent a scholar, but there is no doubt that he was employed by Ethelbert in superintending the erection of a new cathedral at York, and when his patron retired from the archbishopric in A.D. 780, he bequeathed to him the treasures of his ample library.¹

¹ See Lingard, ii. 203, 204.

On Ethelbert's death Alcuin again visited Rome, to obtain the pall for Eanbald, the new archbishop, and on this occasion he again fell in with Charlemagne at Parma. With him he spent the Easter of A.D. 781, and received an earnest invitation to settle in his dominions.

With this request it was impossible for him to comply without the permission of the archbishop and the king. As soon, therefore, as he had completed his errand, he made known what Charlemagne had desired, and obtained leave to join his court about A.D. 782.

The visit thus begun extended over a period of eight years, and during this time he remained a member of the Emperor's household, and superintended the numerous schools which his patron had founded for the advancement of sound learning. His energy was untiring. Not only did he take a direct part in education as a teacher himself, but he wrote and revised books for educational and ecclesiastical uses, and made it the business of his life to forward the designs of the Emperor for restoring the knowledge of the sacred languages, and the promotion of general culture. Among the things which specially claimed his attention, was the correction of the errors which had crept into the various liturgical books and into the manuscripts of

the Old and New Testaments. In those days, when the art of printing was unknown, the accuracy of the various manuscripts was a matter of supreme importance, and Alcuin laboured to make up for the errors of others, too often ignorant and ill-educated, who had been employed in the transcription.

No one set a higher value on his services than Charlemagne, and he set apart for his support the monastery of St. Lupus at Troyes, and that of Bethlehem at Ferrières, together with the cell of St. Judoc on the coast of the Morini. But the enjoyment of ease and comfort, and the royal favour, could not obliterate the recollections of his native land, and he sought leave again and again to return thither. At length, in A.D. 790, the desire of his heart was fulfilled, and he was selected to mediate in a quarrel between his patron and Offa, king of Mercia, respecting a matrimonial alliance.

Many and reiterated were the requests that he would not again quit his Northumbrian friends, and had he consulted his own wishes, and his love for his country, he would have yielded. But the necessities of the Church seemed to demand his presence once more at the court of Charlemagne, and he rejoined him after an absence of two years.

Aided on this occasion by other English scholars,

and representing, it would seem, the English bishop, he now took a prominent part in refuting the doctrines of Felix, who had set forth some novel ideas respecting the adoption of our Lord and Saviour, and in advocating many of the measures which were adopted at the Council of Frankfort.¹

From this day forward he remained abroad, and never returned to England, but busied himself with the reformation of the religious houses, which the Emperor had placed under his care, and with the prosecution of his varied studies.

Though still a deacon, he superintended the monastery of St. Martin of Tours, with the authority and apparently the title of abbot, and about the year A.D. 800 took charge of another at Cormary, on the Indre.² The monastery of Troyes was still subject to his jurisdiction, and near it he founded a home for

¹ One of the canons of the Council enforces the destruction of trees and groves sacred to pagan deities. Another, breathing the spirit of Teutonism, is directed against the belief that God can be adored only in three languages. "There is not a tongue," it says, "in which prayer may not be offered." The last statute of the Council, at the suggestion of the Emperor, admitted Alcuin, on account of his ecclesiastical erudition, to all the honours, and to be named in the prayers of the Council. —Milman's 'Latin Christianity,' iii. 102.

² Smith's 'Dictionary of Christian Biography,' i. p. 73.

pilgrims, and was employed in these and other good works, when the increasing infirmities of old age warned him to seek retirement from his active duties in comparative repose.

His work had indeed been one on which he could look back with no ordinary satisfaction.

Let us cast a glance at the names of some of his most eminent pupils.

The troubled condition of England during the sixth century, and the fact of Alcuin's long absence on the Continent, have helped to obliterate the names of the majority of his English scholars, many of whom followed him to Rome, and found there a more congenial sphere for their labours.

But what an array is presented by the list of his pupils on the Continent, who all owed some portion at least of their education to his care. "Amongst his scholars in the Palatine school were Charles himself, with his sons Charles, Pipin, and Lewis, his sister Gisela, and his daughter of the same name; Angilbert, afterwards abbot of St. Riquier; Adalhard, abbot of Corvey; Rigbod, archbishop of Trèves; Rictrudis, a noble nun of Chelles; and Gundrada, the sister of Adalhard. His most famous pupils during his later years at Tours were Rabanus Maurus, afterwards archbishop of Mentz; Hatto, abbot of Fulda; Haimo, bishop of Halberstadt;

Samuel, abbot of Lorsch, and afterwards bishop of Worms ; Adalbert, abbot of Ferrières ; Aldric, bishop of Sens ; and Amalarius, deacon of Metz.”¹

Again, let us briefly survey the works of which he was the author in the midst of the activities of a busy life.

The list almost exceeds that of the works of the Venerable Bede.

First come the letters, which are between two and three hundred in number, and testify to the variety as also to the station of his numerous correspondents. Amongst these are the Pope Adrian I. ; the kings of Northumbria, Etheldred and Eardulf ; the kings of Mercia, Offa, Ecgferth, and Kenulf ; George, patriarch of Jerusalem ; Paulinus, patriarch of Aquileia ; the archbishops of Canterbury, Lyons, Narbonne, and Orleans ; the bishops of Winchester, of Hexham, of Lindisfarne, of Dunwich, of Elmham ; the abbot of Wearmouth ; the monks of Jarrow, of Lindisfarne, of Whithern.

To the letters succeed the commentaries, drawn naturally from the Greek and Latin Fathers, on Genesis ; on the penitential and gradual Psalms ; on the Canticles and Ecclesiastes ; on St. John ; on the Epistles to Titus, Philemon, and the Hebrews ; and on the Apocalypse.

¹ Smith's 'Dictionary of Christian Biography,' i. 74.

His liturgical works are chiefly adaptations and recensions of parts of the Service Books, and are accompanied by three books or letters on moral and mental philosophy.

Biography also employed his time. He wrote lives of St. Martin, of St. Vedast, of St. Riquier, and, as might be expected from their relationship, of St. Willibrord.

His poems are many and various. "They include prayers, hymns, inscriptions for churches, altars, and books; epitaphs, enigmas, and epigrams; triplets on Scripture history, and epistles to Leo III., Charles, Angilbert, Arno, and others of his correspondents." The longest gives an account of the Church at York, and is full of interesting information respecting its schools and library, the acts of its archbishop, and the deeds of its great men from its first foundation.

We have not space to enumerate many other works. We will proceed only to mention the letters which he wrote to his imperial patron respecting the necessity of carefully instructing those who were to be admitted to baptism, and of remembering that faith must be accepted voluntarily, and cannot be forced.

The subject matter of these letters will be more fully treated in the volume on the 'Conversion of the Continental Teutons.' They are alluded to here

because they form an appropriate clue to our account of the 'Conversion of the Anglo-Saxons.'

The land, from which the followers of Augustine once drew back in terror, and the conversion of which seemed an impossibility, was now sending forth troops of zealous evangelists to their brethren on the Continent,—a Willibrord to convert Frisia, a Winfrid to found the Church of Germany, an Alcuin to moderate the proselytizing zeal of his imperial master, and to carry the learning which would have perished during the ninth century in England, to France and Germany,—till the true faith cultivated under happier auspices, should have returned with Alfred the Great.

The close of Alcuin's life was in keeping with its general features. Having divided his preferments amongst his favourite scholars, he passed peacefully away on Whitsunday, May 19, A.D. 800, and was interred within the church of St. Martin at Tours.

Where could have been found a more appropriate spot for the burial-place of this the greatest pupil of the School of York?

Himself of noble Northumbrian lineage, the relation of Willibrord, a disciple of Egbert who was the friend of Bede, he represented in the history of his life the varied sources of light and civilization which had come to England alike from Roman and

from Celtic influences. The enthusiastic followers of a Columba or a Columbanus never set out on their missionary journeys into the German forests without first offering up their prayers at the shrine of St. Martin of Tours.

Now there slept within the sacred walls one who owed all he was to the self-denying labours of Paulinus and Aidan, of Cuthbert and Bede. The motto of this most distinguished scholar of the School of York may be said to have been the same as that of the Apostle of Gaul, "*Non recuso laborem.*"¹

See the 'Conversion of the Celts,' p. 42.

CHAPTER XIII.

CONCLUSION.

It is now time to mark the salient points which a retrospect of the conversion of England accomplished suggests.

1. And first we cannot fail to notice the effect which the conversion of England produced in its relation to other nations. It at once altered its whole position. Up to the close of the sixth century Britain, as a whole, seemed to be cut off from the rest of the world. The slight intercourse hitherto maintained had been kept up not so much with the Angles and Saxons of the fatherland, as with the Franks who held sway on the opposite shores of Gaul. But the landing of Augustine not only brought a barbarous island into the pale of the Church, but within the pale also of the general society of Europe. That union with the Western world which the landing of Hengist had destroyed, was now renewed. "The civilization, art, letters, which had fled before the sword of the English, returned with the Christian Faith," and from

that time forward intercourse with other nations steadily increased.¹

2. But while its conversion restored England to the older commonwealth of nations, the circumstances which brought it about tended in an eminent degree to maintain the national character of the Church thus founded. The Continent was subdued either by nations already Christian, or by nations who fell like ripe fruit before the first touch of the Christian Faith. Hence everywhere the Church remained unharmed. The Christian bishop alone stood bravely by his flock in the hour of danger, and while the civil magistrate and the military leader often sought safety in flight, he alone was found able and willing to mediate between the conqueror and the conquered, and to act as a bulwark against violence and oppression. But in Britain all this was changed. Not only were Jutes, Angles, and Saxons still pagans, but they obliterated well-nigh all traces of the Celtic Church. Except in the fastnesses of Wales and Strathclyde, the seats of bishops gradually disappeared, and the divisions of dioceses were effaced. The imperial traditions, which operated on the Continent with such disastrous effect, were thus unknown, and "the English Church was saved from the infection of court life and corruption, which forms

¹ Freeman's 'Norman Conquest,' i. 31 ; Green's 'History of the English People,' i. 42.

nearly the whole history of the Franco-Gallic church."¹ It had not to act as the protector of an oppressed and down-trodden people, nor was it exposed to the perils attending a political and party religion. It was not called upon to play the part which made the Frankish bishops too much like secular officers and civil magistrates. The whole fabric had to be built up again from the foundation, and our insular position, combined with the circumstances of the English Conquest, brought it to pass that, in England, almost alone in the West, a purely national Church arose.

3. Equally noteworthy is the variety of the agents to whom the building up of the early English Church was due. When Gregory undertook the conversion of the island, he seems to have comprehended the various tribes under one nationality as Angles, and to have provided for them on this supposition a simple service of ecclesiastical organization. But the actual history of the mission revealed very different issues from those he had contemplated. Well-nigh each of the seven kingdoms owed its evangelization to a different source. Kent was won over to the Faith by Augustine; Wessex by Birinus; East Anglia by Felix, a Burgundian; Northumbria and Mercia by disciples of Columba; Essex by Cedd; and Sussex by Wilfrid. It seemed as though each kingdom might have had

¹ Stubbs' 'Constitutional History,' i. 221.

a ritual of its own and traditions of its own distinct from the rest. The danger was averted by the renunciation of the Celtic customs at Whitby, and the organization established by Archbishop Theodore. There is no denying the strong points of Celtic Christianity. Its zeal, its devotion, its self-sacrifice, brought religion home to the hearts of men. The goodness and nobleness of its representatives attested the heavenly origin of the Faith they taught. But it had its weak points too. Devoid of the power of organization, which was the strength of the Roman Church, making the clan system of the country the basis of its government, it inextricably confounded in Ireland tribal quarrels with ecclesiastical controversies, and had it prevailed in England, it would have introduced new elements of discord and division between Mercian and South-Saxon, Northumbrian and East Anglian, and the unity of England, which was ultimately won with so much difficulty, would have been well-nigh impossible. "Neither," as has been observed,¹ "could England, on the remote fringe as it then was of the civilized world, have afforded to be separated from the arts and culture of Western Europe, which all found their centre at Rome; and which, few and fragmentary as they were, were yet all which survived from

¹ Archbishop Trench's 'Lectures on Mediæval Church History,' p. 37.

the mighty wreck of old Greek and Latin civilization, to carry the Church and the world through the dark and evil days that were before them both."

4. Again, it is not always borne in mind by those who are impatient of the slowness of modern missionary success, that the work in England was not accomplished without great inequalities of progress, without alternations of conquest and defeat. When Augustine entered the city of Canterbury, and the hopes of Bertha were realized by the baptism of her husband, how slowly the evangelization of the country seemed to proceed ! Even when the under-kings of Essex and East Anglia had received the creed of their over-lord Ethelbert, how soon the prospects of the Church were darkened by the restoration of the old pagan worship ! At one moment even the Kentish mission was well-nigh surrendered in despair, while in Essex the Faith, after being outwardly professed, either languished in secret or was utterly subverted. In East Anglia the progress of the Church seemed for a space to be entirely arrested. In Northumbria, where a partial success had been achieved, and "a great door and effectual" seemed to have been opened, a Penda destroyed every trophy of the Gospel; while in Sussex, cut off from the other kingdoms by woods and marshes, paganism extended itself for years as in its last stronghold. But though there

were these fluctuations of success and defeat, of progress and failure, when we look back we see that the leaven which was to leaven the whole mass of barbarism was never *wholly* inert or ineffectual, and that Christianity gradually and steadily made its way.

5. The very fact, however, that these vicissitudes attended the work, is a testimony to one of its most satisfactory features. During the conversion of England we nowhere trace any of those violent and cruel means of coercive proselytism, of baptisms at the point of the sword, which are so painfully associated with some of the campaigns of the great Carl against the heathen Saxons, and which specially disgrace the reign of a Hacon and an Olaf in Scandinavia. Of Ethelbert we are distinctly told that while he hindered none of his people from accepting Christianity, he compelled none to be baptized; and in the case of Edwin of Northumbria and of the kings of Mercia and East Anglia, we notice generally a spirit of fairness and moderation especially to be commended, when due allowance is made for all the circumstances of the times.

6. Nor can we fail to notice how, when the various kingdoms had to a great extent laid aside the religion of Thor and Woden, and the spiritual conquest of the country was on the point of completion, the wise schemes of organization set on foot by

Theodore tended to convert clusters of missionary stations into an established Church. Hitherto the limits of each diocese had commonly answered to those of one of the heptarchic kingdoms. The Court has been in many instances the chief mission-station, and had sent forth those who converted the out-lying settlements. Thus "the kingdom of Kent formed the diocese of Canterbury and her suffragan Rochester; Essex was the diocese of London; Wessex that of Dorchester or Winchester; Northumbria that of York; East Anglia that of Dunwich; the site of the original Mercian see was placed soon after its conversion by St. Chad at Lichfield."

Theodore, on the other hand, having made a permanent peace between the Roman and Celtic schools, and having at the Council of Hertford, in A.D. 673, secured a uniformity of customs, and combined the whole episcopate in one single synod, resolved to provide for the future by increasing the number of the bishops, and making the areas of their dioceses of more manageable proportions. He divided, therefore, the diocese of East Anglia into the sees of Elmham and Dunwich; constituted the bishoprics of Hereford and Worcester; and in A.D. 678 divided Northumbria into four dioceses, York, Hexham, Lindisfarne, and Lindsey, while he revived the ancient British diocese of

Whithern. It has been remarked that the sees in many cases were "selected in full agreement with the German instinct of avoiding cities, and were planted in villages or country monasteries, which served as a nucleus for the later towns."¹ Wessex alone of the larger kingdoms resisted subdivision, but it also within a few years after Theodore's death was divided, and the whole nation was then ranged in sixteen sees, subject to the metropolitan primacy of Canterbury. Thus the unity of the Church preceded the unity of the kingdom by upwards of 150 years, for it was not till A.D. 828 that Egbert, king of Wessex, became the first ruler of the whole of England.

7. As in the conversion of the Celts, so also now we notice that the original missionaries were nearly all bound by monastic vows. We are justified in regarding this as the less pleasant side of the picture, but with all its drawbacks the monastic system did its work well, and that a most important work. The number of the monastic brethren, their union, their singular habits, their constant services, could not fail to attract the notice of the heathen tribes. The energy which they themselves were accustomed to put forth in their efforts merely to conquer, they saw these pioneers of Christian civilization exhibit in

¹ Stubbs' 'Constitutional History,' i. 221.

their enterprises of conversion and teaching. In an Augustine, an Aidan, a Ceadda, a Wilfrid, "they first saw the example of life ruled by a great and serious purpose, which yet was not one of ambition or the excitement of war: a life of deliberate and steady industry, of hard and uncomplaining labour; a life as full of activity in peace, of stout and brave work, as a warrior's was wont to be in the camp, on the march, in the battle. It was in these men, and the Christianity which they taught, and which inspired and governed them, that our forefathers first saw exemplified the sense of human responsibility, first learned the nobleness of a ruled and disciplined life, first enlarged their thoughts of the end of existence, first were taught the dignity and sacredness of honest toil. These great axioms of modern life passed silently from the special homes of religion to those of civil employment; from the cloisters and the cells of men, who, when they were not engaged in worship were engaged in field-work or book-work—during the first extending cultivation, multiplying manuscripts—to the guild of the craftsman, the shop of the trade, the study of the scholar."¹

The monasteries became, chiefly under the influence of the Celtic missionaries first, and of Theodore and Hadrian afterwards, seminaries of useful learning.

¹ Dean Church's 'Influence of Christianity,' p. 127.

Scholars of these last eminent men, we learn from Bede, were as well advanced in Greek and Latin as in their own tongue, and from the schools of York went forth Alcuin, one of the greatest scholars of his age. In no country was the new faith thus made more manifestly the parent of civilization. Inter-course with Western Europe rapidly introduced various arts and sciences, replaced the wooden Celtic churches by structures fashioned after the model of the basilicas of Rome, roofed them with lead, and filled them with glass, and improved the music by the general adoption of the Gregorian chant.

8. One serious defect marred the perfection of the results achieved. The vernacular tongue did not become the language of public worship. The Latin services had been drawn up at a time when Latin was well-nigh the universal language of the West. No one thought of translating them into those provincial dialects which were already growing up in Gaul and Spain. Latin was regarded as the one tongue of worship, the one tongue of literature and government. Hence Augustine and his successors "failed to see that Teutonic England stood in a wholly different position from Romanized Gaul and Spain. They failed to see that the same reasons which required that men should pray in Latin at Rome required that

they should pray in English at Canterbury.”¹ It never seems to have struck them, as it did Ulphilas, Cyril, and Methodius, and other missionaries of the Eastern Church, that one of the most important requisites for permanent success was the translation of the Scriptures and the Liturgy into the vernacular language of their converts. Still we must remember that the teaching on this point of the seventh and eighth was not the teaching of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. In the English Church the mother-tongue was now entirely banished from the most sacred services. The Synod of Cloveshoo, too, enacted, in its tenth canon, that the priest should be able to translate and explain in the native language the Creed, the Lord’s Prayer, and the liturgical forms used at baptism and the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, while the formula of betrothal at marriage was, from the earliest times, in English, and its hearty, sound, and simple sterling substance is preserved in the English ritual to the present day. England, moreover, had not been converted long before, as we here see, she began to form a vernacular literature of her own. A pupil of Hadrian, as we have seen, gave his countrymen the earliest English Psalter; the Venerable Bede, who was born while Wilfrid was evangelizing Sussex, translated at least the Gospel of St. John; while

¹ Freeman’s ‘Norman Conquest,’ i. 32.

Cædmon, paraphrasing in a metrical form the chief parts of the sacred history, was enabled to tell his Northumbrian brothers, who had learnt of old that the goddess of death had conquered Baldr, how "the white Christ," after suffering death, had descended into Hades, and rising again had triumphed over him "that had the power of death."¹ Thus gradually the new Faith infused its influence into the feelings and habits of the English people, and the insular Teutons became in their turn the most zealous missionaries to their still heathen brethren on the Continent.

9. That the conversion of the heathen tribes was but partial, and that much of the old leaven of heathenism could not be eradicated, is only what might have been expected. It is easy to destroy an image or fling it into the stream. It is very hard to extirpate a faith and eradicate time-honoured superstitions. This must have been found especially hard in dealing with the Teutonic system of nature-worship.

In like manner, in respect to heathen festivals, he would not have them abolished altogether, but suggested that, on the anniversaries of the saints booths should be erected, and the people permitted to celebrate their feasts in honour, not of the old

¹ Cædmon's 'Paraphrase,' ed. Thorpe, p. 289.

pagan deities, but of the true God, the giver of all good. He considered that he had found a precedent for the advice he gave in the divine method of educating the Elect nation after their departure from Egypt. They had been wont to sacrifice to false gods. They were not now forbidden to offer sacrifice, "the object only of their worship was changed; and the same animals they had been wont to sacrifice to idols they now sacrificed in honour of the Lord their God." Whatever may be the value of the arguments he adduced, it was natural that he should desire to facilitate the transition from heathenism to Christianity, and by purifying and exalting existing ceremonies, to prepare the way for ascending towards the understanding of higher truths.

The denunciations of early Teutonic missionaries, and the language of the English Penitentials,¹ alike testify to the tenacious hold which old beliefs still retained over the minds of the people, and to the glamour which the old well-worship and tree-worship, magic and soothsaying, still exerted over their former votaries. When we reflect on the hold which old superstitions still have after the lapse of twenty centuries in the country districts of England, it is surely no matter of surprise that in those far-back times it was found difficult to draw a sharp boundary-line between the old

¹ Hurd., 'Penitent.,' l. xv. 1; Egbert, 'Penitent.,' iv. 12.

and the new beliefs. It was no settled policy on the part of the forefathers of our English civilization, but the spirit of the age itself, which refused to disjoin the judicial assembly from its old accompanying heathen rites ; which kept heathen festivals on Christian holidays, and celebrated heathen festivals purified of their grosser elements under a Christian guise ; which exchanged the remembrance-cup, once drunk at the banquet in honour of Thor and Woden, for a similar salutation of the Apostles, and in place of the image of Freyr caused the staff of some saint to be carried round the corn-fields to drive away the field-mice and the caterpillars ; which preserved the latter names of the week, and inextricably entwined the name of a Teutonic goddess with the most joyous of the Christian festivals, names which have survived all the intervening changes of thought and feeling, and remain to the present day the undying memorials of the period of twilight between Heathendom and Christianity.

10. Thus founded, the English Church commenced her great work. The conversion of the Teutons in our island, like all conversions, whether of races or individuals, had been imperfect. Still there was much, very much, cause for thankfulness to the great Head of the Church, and He, Who is with her always, "even unto the end of the world," had not failed to fulfil His gracious promise of help

and guidance. None can say that the stock of that tree was barren or unfruitful which put forth such vigorous shoots as the Anglo-Saxon Church, which produced missionaries like Willibrord, Wilfrid, and Winfrid; a poet like Cædmon; bishops like Cedd and Chadd; scholars like Bede and Alcuin; and later on a king like Alfred.

Still, in fairness it must be acknowledged that there is something to be set on the other side.

"Of Angles and Saxons it must be owned," writes Archbishop Trench, "that if they gained much when they bowed to the yoke of Christ, there was also something which, though they might have kept, they did at the same time let go. Among the grave shadows resting on the early English Church, I certainly will not reckon the devotion which she felt and showed to the distant mother that bore her. And yet it must be freely owned that this devotion, romantic, childlike, and happily ignorant of much that would have put it to a severe test, was not always bestowed wisely or well. Its existence none can contest. Among all the Teutonic tribes, the English, being once converted, proved the most devoted children of the Church. More than thirty kings and queens descended from their thrones to end their days in cloistral retreats. It would be difficult to number the other scions of noble houses,

male and female, who thus sought to win heaven by the abandonment at once of the pomps and duties of earth. From no other Western land were pilgrimages of rich and poor to the threshold of the Apostles so frequent or so numerous. From no other land did there flow into the Papal exchequer such rich contributions. Peter's pence, if afterwards adopted by others, was an English invention at the first."¹

It was natural that the monastic element, to which the conversion of England was due, should pervade the whole mass of English society. Still it cannot be doubted that before long it was overdone. Public lands were more and more alienated to churches and monasteries; nor was it possible that this alienation could take place without lessening the number of those who should have been found in the front rank on the battle-field defending their country's honour. Even Bede, the gentle and retiring scholar, is full of solicitude as to the possible consequences if the thane persisted in assuming the tonsure, together sometimes with his sons, and neglected arms and martial exercises. "The coarse animalism, from which the Anglo-Saxon temperament was not free," prompted too often to an ignoble love of ease, and

¹ 'Mediaeval Church History, p. 41.

a shrinking from the pain and toil of the duties of life in troublous times.

Such a people, though won over in name to the Christian Church, needed a harsh discipline, and that discipline was not spared. From many a monastery there went up, during the eighth and ninth centuries, the cry, "From the fury of the Northmen, deliver us, good Lord."

But the incoming of these new elements was a blessing in disguise. Those from whom Angle and Saxon prayed to be delivered were "stern, but effectual, reminders that men cannot with impunity leave unfulfilled the duties to which God has called them, whatever else in the way of will-worship they may substitute in their room."

That the lesson of these stern events was not wholly unlearned, is proved by the change which came over the country, when a sovereign like Alfred the Great arose to control her destinies and guide her arms.

But even when all due allowance has been made for want of completeness and shortcoming in the history of the conversion of our land, it is impossible to deny the greatness of the consequences which have resulted to the world at large from the self-denying labours of Augustine and Aidan, of Paulinus and Cedd, of Wilfrid and Cuthbert, of Willibrord and

Winfrid. Never were men less conscious of the vastness of the consequences which depended upon their exertions and their zeal. Never were consequences of the utmost magnitude more truly and effectually promoted.

It is rarely that a country is twice called to evangelize the world. But this has happened to England. The world of the mediæval period was the world of Belgium and Switzerland, of Holland and Germany, into which the English Church sent forth her sons to evangelize their kindred, though oftentimes at the cost of their lives.

The world of the modern period includes America and Australia, India and China, lands of which Gregory and Augustine never heard. The seeds of all that is possible now, of all that God is calling us to accomplish, were sown when the little company, who passed in fear and trembling through the kingdom of France, entered at last the rude wooden city of Canterbury, embowered in its ancient forests, and when Aidan, protesting against a too quick despairing of success, resolved to devote his life to the conversion of Northumbria.

The lesson to be learnt from the conversion of our forefathers may be summed up in the forcible words of a living writer which shall conclude this little volume. "The lesson of history, I think," says Dean Church,

“is this : *not* that all the good which might have been hoped for to society has followed from the appearance of the Christian religion in the forefront of human life ; *not* that in this wilful and blundering world, so full of misused gifts and wasted opportunities and disappointed promise, mistake and mischief have ever been in its train ; *not* that in the nations where it has gained a footing it has mastered their besetting sins, the falsehood of one, the ferocity of another, the characteristic sensuality, the characteristic arrogance of others. But history teaches us this : that in tracing back the course of human improvement we come, in one case after another, upon Christianity as the source from which improvement derived its principle and its motive ; we find no other source adequate to account for the new spring of amendment ; and, without it, no other sources of good could have been relied upon.”¹

¹ Dean Church's 'Influences of Christianity,' pp. 137, 138.

APPENDIX.

LIST OF ENGLISH SEES.

KINGDOMS.		SEES.	
i.	Kent.....	Canterbury.	
	A. D.		A. D.
Augustine	597	Honorius	627
Laurence	605	Deusdedit	655
Mellitus.....	619	Theodore	668
Justus.....	624		
ii.	East Saxons.....	London.	
Mellitus.....	604	Wini	666
[Cedd, in Essex	654]	Erconwald	675
iii.	Kent.....	Rochester.	
Justus	604	Ithamar.....	644
Romanus	624	Damian.....	655
Paulinus	633	Putta.....	669
iv.	Northumbria.....	York.	
Paulinus	625	Bosa	678
Chad	665	Wilfrid again	686
* Wilfrid	669	Bosa again	691
v.	East Anglia.....	Dunwich.	
Felix	631	Bisi	669
Thomas.....	647	Acci	673
Boniface	652		
vi.	Northumbria.....	Lindisfarne.	
Aidan	635	Tuda	664
Finan	651	Eata	678
Colman.....	661	Cuthbert	685

* Consecrated A.D. 665.

vii.	Wessex... ..	(i.)	Dorchester.	A. D.
Birinus	635		Lothare.....	670
Agilbert	650		Ætla.....	679 (?)
	Wessex	(ii)	Winchester.	
Wini	662		Daniel	705
Heddi	676			
viii.	Mercia		Lichfield.	
Diuma	656		Jaruman	662
Callach	658		Chad	669
Trumhere	659		Winfrid.....	672
ix.	East Anglia		Elmham.	
Badwin	673		Nothbert	693
x.	Mercia		Hereford.	
Putta	676		Tyrhtel	688
xi.	Northumbria.....		Hexham.	
*Eata	678		John	687
Trumbert	681		Wilfrid	706
Eata	685			
xii.	Mercia...Sidnacester (for Lindsey).			
Eadhad	678		Ethelwin	680
xiii.	Mercia		Worcester.	
Bosel	680		Ostfor	692
xiv.	Mercia.....	†	Leicester.	
	Cuthwin.....		680	
xv.	Sussex.....		Selsey.	
	Wilfrid.....		681,2	
xvi.	Wessex		Sherborne.	
	Aldhelm.....		705	

* Eata also held Lindisfarne. † See administered by Wilfrid A.D. 691.

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